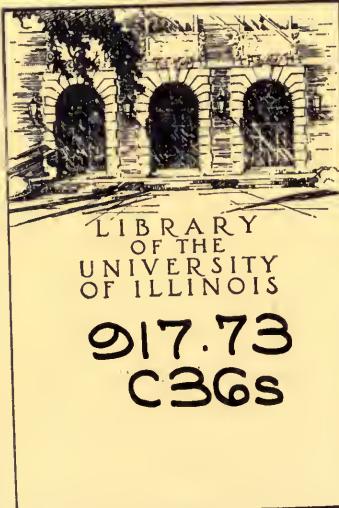


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# Spoon River Country

Chandler



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Dear Dr. D. C. Merriam,  
(who is partly responsible for  
this)  
With every good wish  
Joseph S. Handler

April 11. 1923.



# THE SPOON RIVER COUNTRY

BY

JOSEPHINE CRAVEN CHANDLER

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To

My Mother and the Memory of  
My Father

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**CONTENTS.**

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DEC 13 1954 MARSHALL

I.	The Valley of the Sangamon.....	255
II.	The Valley of the Spoon.....	271
III.	Old Lewistown.....	284
IV.	Old Lewistown—Continued.....	298
V.	The McNeely Mansion.....	312
VI.	The Church of St. James.....	316
VII.	School Days of the Poet.....	320
VIII.	Here and There.....	326

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## PREFACE.

Whatever is implied by that vague term the genius of places is comprehended in all justness of conception by the new collateral field of literary endeavor now coming into such general recognition and appreciation—the literature of locality. How much it has enriched the field of letters may be fully known only to the bookman who, denied the opportunity for travel, for personal adventure and discovery in regions made familiar during long evenings under the reading lamp, is yet obsessed by that strange nostalgia—the “nostalgia of unknown lands.”

Through the labors of the literary geographer he now may come to know the London of Dickens almost as Dickens knew it; he may traverse the Cevennes with Robert Louis, the “well beloved,” and his little ass, Modesta, or the long lovely reaches of the Thames with Meredith; the Eliot country is as an open book, and who does not know his Wessex is, of a certainty, innocent of Hardy. In America already the “Thoreau Country,” “Whittier-Land,” and many other localities have come to have a significance proportionate to the deep interest which they hold for the literary pilgrim, and sufficiently recognized even by the most illiterate driver of the sight-seeing automobile; Indiana as the habitat of a large and flourishing school of writers—poets, novelists and journalists—is in the making; Bret Harte and Mark Twain have bequeathed us fertile fields beyond the Mississippi; but Spoon River, that small and tortuous stream lying like a bit of negligible twist upon the map of Central Illinois—Spoon River has arrived.

As comprehended by Edgar Lee Masters, Spoon River is both a river and a town. It is, in reality, a collective expression made to cover the several community groups which go

to make up the social entity of his book. His material is drawn from six or seven counties and includes the area watered by two small rivers. A glance at the map of this region will show how the various towns to which allusion is made are grouped. To the valley of the Sangamon belong Chandlerville, Winchester, Atterbury, Clary's Grove and Mason City; while Ipava, Summum, Bernadotte and London Mills are in the more or less immediate vicinity of the Spoon. Between these two is the majestic and slowly flowing Illinois receiving upon her placid bosom the turbulent outpourings of the lesser streams. Strangely enough, the two chief focal points round which the drama of "Anthology" ranges, do not come by name into this remarkable collection of epitaphs. They are Petersburg and Lewistown. They are confessed to by Mr. Masters in the following words:

"I have lived in Illinois all my life save the first year of my existence, which was spent in Kansas. I grew up to twelve years of age in Petersburg, when we moved to Lewistown.

"Both Petersburg and Lewistown are full of quaint and picturesque types of character, but of a dissimilar sort. Petersburg and its environs are noted for their high-bred Virginians, their buoyant, zestful, rollicking Kentuckians, given to storytelling, to fiddling, dancing and horse-racing. Every prank and every burst of humor on the part of Lincoln had its counterpart among the dozens of the oldtimers of this locality. There are some of this class of people around Lewistown, but they lived on a less joyous level, while the town itself took a more serious tone and even an intellectual one from the New Englanders who divided the control of affairs with the Liberals and threw each other into a clear relief unknown to Petersburg.

"People ask me how I came to write 'The Spoon River Anthology,' Well, they must look back to the days I have just briefly sketched to get its origin."

It will be seen, by the foregoing, that Mr. Masters has concerned himself not only with individuals but with communities, and this is significant for it is only by relating the individual to the community that one may come to an intelligent comprehension of his relation to the country in which he dwells, the soil from which he springs and to which he is, in ways that are both alien and integral, related.

This volume is designed for the assistance of those whose enthusiasm for the poetry of Edgar Lee Masters may inspire them to visit the country which his genius has immortalized.

Although it concerns itself with those places comprehended by the "Spoon River Anthology," its territory includes, incidentally, the locales of a number of poems of a later issue by the same author. Of these "Christmas at Indian Point" and "Old Piery" belong to the Sangamon Valley, "Steam Shovel Cut" to the Valley of the Spoon, and "At Havana" to a point on the eastern bank of the Illinois, and nearly opposite to the mouth of the Spoon—the "house and fish boats" of its allusion being the first sight to greet the eye from the long bridge that spans the former river at that place.

My whole life having been lived, with the exception of certain school years, in what I have chosen to call the Spoon River Country, my knowledge of this region may, I think, claim to be authoritative. In my youth, which was spent in what I have broadly classified as the Sangamon Valley, I had at my command the same resources of anecdote and common allusion which gave to Mr. Masters his finest characterizations; and with "Doug" Armstrong and Aaron Hatfield I have sat at meat. In my later life my residence changed to the northern portion of the region under consideration and Lewistown, Bernadotte and other Spoon River towns came within my ken.

Such personal knowledge as I have of the people and places coming within the compass of this work has been augmented from many outside sources. I have had recourse to

the Illinois State Historical Society Journals; the various histories of Menard, Mason and Fulton Counties; to Mr. T. J. Onstot's "Lincoln & Salem;" to Mr. Harvey Ross' "The Early Pioneers;" to the files of the *Fulton Democrat*; to notes which Mr. Francis Love made of an interview with Major Walker in collecting certain data to be used in the Tarbell "Life of Lincoln;" to various Lincolniana, and to infinite correspondence and interviews with friends and family connections of the characters coming under discussion. For all such valuable assistance I wish to acknowledge my obligation and to express my thanks.

## I.

### THE VALLEY OF THE SANGAMON.

Although this little river has found its way into literature through William Cullen Bryant and his "Painted Cup," and into history through its association with the young manhood of Abraham Lincoln; and although its neighborhood has furnished the inspiration for no less than eight characters of Mr. Masters' "Anthology," yet its identity, for the uses of that book, is lost under the collective title "Spoon River."

Physiographically speaking the Valley of the Sangamon, though claiming one hundred and twenty miles in length, scarcely exceeds two miles at its point of greatest width; so that it may be regarded as a slight vicarious atonement for the un-recognition of the "Anthology" that for the purposes of this book—which, of course, are merely those of commendation—the Valley of the Sangamon is allowed to stand for all the Spoon River country lying south and southeast of the Illinois River.

So considered, Petersburg must be regarded as the nucleus. It was here that Masters spent most of those early years before he moved to Lewistown; here he came to know personally, and through the infinite resources of anecdote and familiar allusion, that group of characters which are among

the most benign and ennobling of the collection; and here he came beneath the spell of those two men who were to prove, immediate family influences aside, the most constant sources of inspiration in his life and art—his grandfather, Mr. Squire D. Masters, and Abraham Lincoln.

It was to the home of Mr. Squire D. Masters that Mr. Hardin Masters—the father of Edgar Lee—brought his wife and infant son on his return from the brief sojourn in Kansas that gave to that state the honor of the poet's birth. Here the boy lived with his parents during his tenderest years, and here after his father abandoned the farm for the profession of the law, many happy weeks were spent each year. Even after the removal of the Hardin Masters family to Lewistown the boy returned each summer to dream away the happy days at the old place, to delve amongst the books of his grandfather's library, to prowl his grandmother's attic for treasure—quaint old costumes, discarded furniture, faded photographs and other joy-invoking "rulics," as he called them (the usage of that word is still sacred to the memory of that time). Care-free days lived under the apple trees with Burns, in the great hay-barns, or on those joyous journeys through woods and fields with the beloved grandmother which are among the treasured memories of every grand-child of the Masters clan.

The old Masters home still stands. It is now in possession of the poet's uncle, Mr. Wilbur Masters, though it has been remodeled in recent years and its aspect is somewhat changed. "The Squire" and his wife are both dead but their deeds live after them and there are none in all the neighborhood but do them honor. Their gifted grandson himself has paid them tribute in the epitaphs of "Davis Matlock" and "Lucinda Matlock." In these two characterizations he has used the Christian name of his respective grandparents, although the grandfather was invariably known by the first of his two names, Squire being in this case both a cognomen and a sign of office, so that his full signature would read Squire



SQUIRE DAVIS MASTERS.  
(Grandfather of the poet.)



Davis Masters, Esquire. The surname is also a matter of family history, Elizabeth Matlock being the name of Mr. Squire Masters' mother.

Although a farmer, Squire Masters was a man of excellent education; an intelligent, well-rounded man and one given to the acquisition of "material things as well as culture and wisdom," having a fine presence and dominating personality. A neighbor of his said to me: "No matter what day of the week it was, Squire Masters always impressed me as being just ready to start to church." Indeed the allusion was a typical one, for his deeply spiritual nature seems to have found its fullest expression in religious exercise. Not only was he a leader in all church activities in his neighborhood, but his private devotions were so earnest and so full of dignity that one of the family who knew stenography was induced to take down one of the "blessings" invariably invoked before meat. It was a perilous undertaking, for discovery would have involved the almost certain displeasure of the dignified old man, but the task was accomplished successfully and the various copies which were made from it are regarded by those possessing them as among the most treasured mementoes of the beloved grandparent.

The devotion of the poet's grandfather to the cause of temperance once suggested to the youthful Edgar Lee who was granted many pranks—being the favorite grandson—a joke that nearly brought him to confusion. He had found in the wood shed a can of bright red paint. He solidly covered a board with it and when it was dry made with white the picture of a foaming glass over the legend "Beer 5c a glass," and the further embellishment of a hand with a pointing index finger. He placed the sign at the near by cross road, with the hand pointing toward the Masters house.

That evening the "Squire" was busying himself about the chores and had started to the barnyard with a pail of swill when the first "customer" arrived. He was bleary eyed and somewhat unstable as he approached. "I see you've

something to sell," he essayed. "Where 'bouts do you keep it, Squire?" Mr. Masters had a cider mill on his farm and supposed the remark to constitute an insinuation that he kept "hard" cider on the place. His wrath was superb. He set down his pail of swill and stood back from it with elaborate dignity. "Now, sir," he said, "that's all I have to offer you about this place. If that suits your taste, just help yourself and no charge."

How the visitor contrived his exit is not known, but a certain small boy made a cautious escape from the scene and recovered the sign board without loss of time. It is still numbered among the "properties" of the woodshed, but the true history of its brief usefulness was never explained by him to the master of the house.

"Lucinda Matlock" so essentially characterizes the life and philosophy of Lucinda Masters that the analogy is unmistakable:

I went to the dances at Chandlerville,  
And played snap-out at Winchester.  
One time we changed partners,  
Driving home in the moonlight of middle  
June,  
And then I found Davis.

We married and lived together for seventy  
years,  
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve chil-  
dren,  
Eight of whom we lost  
Ere I had reached the age of sixty.  
I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed  
the sick,  
I made the garden, and for holiday  
Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,  
And by Spoon River gathered many a shell,  
And many a flower and medicinal weed—



LUCINDA MASTERS  
Grandmother of Poet.



Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the  
green valleys.

At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,  
And passed to a sweet repose.

What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,  
Anger, discontent, and drooping hopes?

Degenerate sons and daughters,

Life is too strong for you—

It takes life to love life.

The incident of the dance at Winchester, except that it occurred not in "middle June" but sleighing time, is one that Mrs. Masters delighted to relate to her children and grandchildren. The story always finished in the same way, referring to the change of partners: "And after that we stayed changed"; or if by any chance it ended differently—this romance of Grandfathers and Grandmothers—there was always a demand for the old version. "And Grandmother, did you *stay changed* after that?" And she would answer, "Yes, after that we just stayed changed".

It is true that the twain were married and lived together for seventy years; that she bore twelve children, though three died in infancy; that she wove, and spun, and kept the house, and nursed the sick, and made the garden—this splendid vital woman—and most notably it is true that for holiday she "rambled over the hills where sang the larks." Her intense love of nature was the attribute which above all others endeared her to her family.

Across a portion of the farm runs a little creek, a tributary of the Sangamon, and this was the objective of many delightful journeys. On these occasions it is said that her joyousness and elation transcended every difficulty and that she freed herself to the great gladness of the universal mood. Her knowledge of plants and animals was amazing and added to this was a fund of folk lore that made these trips an infinite delight. She lived, in truth, to the age of ninety-six and from "Anger, discontent and drooping hopes" she was

delivered through lo, those many years, by her superb love of life.

Edgar Lee has attested his respect and love for his grandparents by the further tribute of the dedicatory inscription which appears on the fly-leaf of the volume of his poems called "The Great Valley" which reads:

To the Memory of  
SQUIRE DAVIS AND LUCINDA MASTERS

who, close to nature, one in deep religious faith, the other in  
pantheistic rapture and heroism, lived nearly a  
hundred years in the land of Illinois

I inscribe

THE GREAT VALLEY

in admiration of their great strength, mastery of life, hopefulness, clear and beautiful democracy.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS.

In that collection of poems the one "I Shall Never See You Again" voices a grief and passionate regret that cannot fail of appreciation among those who have known through close association or intimate report the character of Lucinda Masters, and of the close tie that united her to her grandson.

The farm of "Sevigne Houghton" adjoins the Masters farm, and this is the neighborhood of the Kincaids.

Where are Uncle Isaac and Aunt Emily,  
And old Towney Kincaid and Sevigne Houghton—  
All, all are sleeping on the hill.

Goodpasture, Hoheimer, Trenary and Pantier are names familiar to this region but no incident in their lives appears to have connected them with the "Anthology". Apparently their names alone have been made to serve; but the character of "Aaron Hatfield" is authentic.



SEVIGNE HOUGHTON.



The Hatfield farm is twice referred to. That character designated as "The Unknown" recalls how

As a boy, reckless and wanton,  
Wandering with gun in hand thro' the field  
Near the mansion of Aaron Hatfield  
I shot a hawk perched on the top of a dead  
tree;

and "Hare Drummer" wonders:

Do the boys and girls still go to Siever's  
For cider after school in summer?  
Or gather hazelnuts among the thickets  
On Aaron Hatfield's farm when the frosts  
begin?

The Hatfield mansion was, in its day, the most pretentious in the neighborhood. It has since burned, but the old Menard County atlas has preserved it for us with all the quaint dignity of the wood cut. To this period of his life belongs the "memory-picture" of the pioneer:

Better than granite, Spoon River,  
Is the memory picture you keep of me  
Standing before the pioneer men and women  
There at Concord Church on communion day.  
Speaking in broken voice of the peasant youth  
Of Galilee who went to the city  
And was killed by bankers and lawyers;  
My voice mingling with the June wind  
That blew over the wheat fields from Atterbury;  
While the white stones in the burying ground  
Around the church shimmered in the summer sun.  
And there, though my own memories  
Were too great to bear, were you, O pioneers,  
With bowed heads breathing forth your sorrows

For sons killed in battle and the daughters  
And little children who vanished in life's  
morning,  
Or at the intolerable hour of noon.  
But in those moments of tragic silence,  
When the wine and bread were passed,  
Came the reconciliation for us—  
Us the ploughmen and hewers of wood,  
Us the peasants of Galilee—  
To us came the Comforter  
And the consolation of the tongues of flame !

Concord church is three miles north of Petersburg. It was established in 1830 and was the first church of the denomination known as the Cumberland Presbyterian to be established in the county. The building in which Aaron Hatfield worshiped is now replaced by a modern structure but the "white stones in the burying ground around the church" still shimmer in the summer sun, and the June wind still blows across the wheat fields from Atterbury three miles away.

One wishes that he might have remained on his comfortable farm and might, eventually, have come to rest in that old graveyard that is sweet with clover and odorous with arbor vitae but history relates that in his latter years he sold the farm and moved to Petersburg, investing his substance in a home, a store, a lumber yard, a flouring mill and various enterprises. The guileless temperament of the kindly old man made him unfit for commercial life, and partly through bad management and partly through the contrivance of the unscrupulous he lost one after another of his various possessions and came, in the end, almost to penury. His misfortunes so preyed upon him that before his death his mind began to show affection. He died at the age of eighty. One hopes that sometimes in those later years to him also  
came the comforter,  
And the consolation of the tongues of flame !





HANNAH ARMSTRONG.

Miller's Ferry, but a few miles north and east of Concord Church, is the "Miller's Ford" of the "Anthology". The "deep woods" of "William Good's" allusion still cover the hills on the right bank of the Sangamon at this point, and doubtless you still can see

at twilight

The soft winged bats fly zig zag here and there.

Here "Thomas Ross" saw a cliff swallow make "her nest in a hole in the high clay bank" and drew from it an analogy of his own life.

To "James Garber" the place had a symbolic meaning. He bids the passer-by, after life shall have brought him "understandings," take thought of him and of his path

who walked therein and knew

That neither man or woman, neither toil,

No duty, gold nor power

Can ease the longing of the soul,

The loneliness of the soul!

All the associations of this place are sad, and saddest of all perhaps are the musings of "Russell Kincaid" in those last days of his life when he sat in the

forsaken orchard

Where beyond the fields of greenery shimmered

The hills of Miller's Ford;

voicing an atavistic longing that he might have been a tree,

Then I had fallen in the cyclone

Which swept me out of the soul's suspense

Where it's neither earth nor heaven.

One character, at least, of this group may be identified. "James Garber" is the same who "wrote beautifully," and whose letter, written for "Hannah Armstrong" was, maybe, "lost in the mails". His real name was Jacob Garber and the letter incident is authentic. He was, at one time, a neighbor of Hannah Armstrong, though she belonged, at an earlier period, in the Clary's Grove group.

Mr. T. J. Onstot says in his "Lincoln & Salem": "Miller's Ferry was \* \* \* once surveyed for a town and was called

Huron. My brother R. J. Onstot has a plat of it in Lincoln's own handwriting and prizes it very highly. The town looks very fine on paper, though there was only one house in it in its earlier days".

Walter Pater, writing of Leonardo da Vinci, says that "two ideas were especially confirmed in him as reflexes of things that had touched his life in childhood beyond the depths of other impressions—the smiling of women and the motion of great waters."

It is so that all true biography should be written. In this sense all art is autobiographic, since in creative work alone man records the "adventure of his soul". It is in the study of those impressions "especially confirmed in him" as a reflex that we come to the life of Abraham Lincoln and its influence upon the life and art of Masters through its immediate association with the Spoon River country.

Three characters of the "Anthology" are concerned with Lincoln: "Anne Rutledge", "Hannah Armstrong" and "William H. Herndon"; four poems of the collection, "The Great Valley", "The Lincoln and Douglas Debates", "Autochthon", "Gobineau to Tree" and "Old Peiry", and not less than four poems from the volume called "The Open Sea" are written around him.

New Salem, the home of Lincoln from 1831 to 1837 is two miles south of Petersburg, and just southwest of Salem is Clary's Grove. Clary's Grove is, in fact, exactly what the name implies, a grove. It is not found on any map but Lincolniana has comprehended it too completely to require further proof of authenticity. There is no history treating of these early years of Lincoln that does not speak of the Clary's Grove boys and their staunch adherence to him from his initiation among them in the famous wrestling match with Jack Armstrong till their final dramatic appearance in 1859 at the hall of the convention which gave him the nomination that ultimately placed him in the Executive Chair.

Clary's Grove was one of the first neighborhoods to be





FIDDLER JONES.

inhabited by the whites. Most of the settlers came from Kentucky and Tennessee. Among the prominent families were the Clarys, Armstrongs, Watkinses, Potters, Jones and Greens; all fine staunch people, but whose boys were typical sons of the frontier; fond of drinking, hard riding, horse-racing, dancing, fiddling and all rude sports, particularly those which constituted tests of strength. Among the Watkinses and Armstrongs, especially, there persists to this day a tradition of horse-racing and fiddling. There is, as there has always been, a "Fiddler Watkins" and a "Fiddler Armstrong", and a race track is a common adjunct of their ample farms.

Where is old Fiddler Jones  
Who played with life all his ninety years,  
Braving the sleet with bared breast,  
Drinking, rioting, thinking neither of wife  
    nor kin,  
Nor gold nor love nor heaven?  
Lo! He babbles of the fish-fries of long ago,  
Of the horse-races long ago at Clary's Grove,  
Of what Abe Lincoln said  
    One time at Springfield.

"Fiddler Jones" was the brother of "Hannah Armstrong". All of that family were "first class fighting men", tall and fine looking. The family came from Green County, Kentucky, and John, who was never addressed or spoken of by any other name than "Fid" or "Fiddler", had, while in that state, received considerable education. He played "by note", composed, and even wrote music for his violin. He was a dancing master as well and was distinguished by a manner and bearing quite at variance with the crude behavior of his period. Many of his pupils still recall him clearly and his name is associated with nearly all of the festivities of his day. His fiddle, which was really a viola, is still the cherished possession of the family. He died a few years ago in Fairbury, Nebraska, leaving behind him a comfortable estate. His mantle has, happily, fallen upon the shoulders of his

nephew, Mr. John Armstrong of Oakford, Illinois, son of Hannah Armstrong. His music is still in requisition and his clear memory makes him one of the few living men connecting the present generation with the Great Emancipator.

The friendship between Lincoln and the Armstrongs began just as history relates, with a wrestling match between Jack Armstrong and Lincoln—an affair in which the latter came out victor. Thereafter Lincoln lived with the Armstrongs for a time and always, one is told, regarded their house as his home; indeed the motherly Hannah treated him as one of her own sons. The opportunity for requital of her great kindness came to Lincoln when he undertook the defense of William Armstrong (better known as "Duff"), the youngest son of the family, in the famous "almanac trial" which ended in his acquittal.

It is the same son who, in the epitaph, "Hannah Armstrong," is called "Doug." Mr. John Armstrong has told me the letter incident referred to in the "Anthology." Duff, he said, had asked for his discharge from the army, having become painfully affected by sciatic rheumatism. The discharge had been granted but the papers, for some reason, withheld for a time and the boy kept on guard duty though his suffering was considerable. He wrote his mother asking her to appeal personally to "Abe" to urge matters, so Mrs. Armstrong got "Uncle Jakey" Garber to write the letter. Soon a telegram came from the President saying that Duff would be home immediately and so, presently, he was, and one is glad to know that "Aunt Hannah" did not have to travel all the way to Washington as demanded by the exigencies of art. She was one of the fine old women of her generation, living into the nineties and dying in Winterset, Iowa. As for Duff, he became, after the war, a veterinarian and has eaten many a meal in my father's house as he went from one point to another about the countryside.

The town of New Salem, which declined with the building up of Petersburg, has been rebuilt within the last several summers. The Old Salem League was formed for this





DOUG. ARMSTRONG  
Better known as "Duff."

express purpose, and the plan is to make the village a permanent memorial to him who for a season lingered there. William Randolph Hearst had previously bought the site and donated it for the purpose. Several log houses have been constructed, some of them exactly, and all of them approximately upon the sites of the buildings that formerly comprised the village.\*

The splendid pageant written and directed by Florence McGill Wallace and staged on the New Salem common on the 2nd and 3rd of September, 1918, as a part of the Centennial observance of the State of Illinois, brought those who saw it strangely close to that period of Lincoln's life. All those taking part in the performance were, wherever possible, members of the families of those involved in the history so revivified. Some of the cabins were occupied by descendants of the very people who built the originals, and this personal element in the participation of the Menard County folk gave to the enterprise a spirit unique in pageantry.

Four episodes from the life of Lincoln while at New Salem constituted the dramatic theme. 1. The coming of the Big Brother (the arrival of Lincoln at Salem on a flat-boat). 2. Arrival of Clary's Grove boys (the initiation of Lincoln among them by way of a wrestling match). 3. "Captain Lincoln" (the incident of the Clary's Grove boys choosing a captain for the New Salem contingent for the Black Hawk war). 4. Sunday afternoon in Salem. The village belle, Anne Rutledge.

The last mentioned episode comprehends Lincoln's wooing as well as his great grief after the death of her who was his first sweetheart. It was, as it might well have been, the most stirring and significant of them all, for there can be no doubt that his love for Anne Rutledge was the greatest of the shaping forces that touched that soul already starred by destiny.

---

\*Since made a State Park by Act of the Legislature, approved April 3, 1919. Contains museum where Lincoln memorials and relics will be preserved.

Out of me unworthy and unknown  
The vibrations of deathless music:  
“With malice toward none, with charity  
for all.”  
Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward  
millions,  
And the beneficent face of a nation  
Shining with justice and truth.  
I am Anne Rutledge who sleeps beneath  
these weeds,  
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,  
Wedded to him, not through union,  
But through separation.  
Bloom forever, O Republic,  
From the dust of my bosom!

Anne Rutledge! A fragrance hangs about the name—the “Fragrance of things destined for immortality.” Already the hand of the iconoclast has been at work, but he has anticipated his hour, and the affirmation of history, based upon the authentic testimony of those yet living, has made her place secure. No myth, no “legend”, may obscure her claim who has inspired to great purpose the heart of a great man.

Her body was laid to rest in the old Concord cemetery. Not the one adjacent to the church in which Aaron Hatfield worshipped, but one about a mile away, lost, not only to the view, but almost to the memory, and which no longer has even a road by way of approach. Her ashes have since been removed to Oakland cemetery which is on a beautiful wooded hill near Petersburg. Within the year a great granite boulder has been erected to her memory, having the Masters’ epitaphic poem, taken from the “Anthology,” graved upon its face, but prior to the placing of this monument a rough stone taken from the dam of the old Rutledge mill at New Salem most appropriately marked the grave of this sweet girl whose unostentatious nature sought no exaltation but

the exaltation of the spirit. Even to approach that spot is to feel the recrudescence of old pain. One is tense with the agony that searched the heart of Lincoln on that storm-torn night when he cried out to his friend: "Oh, I cannot sleep while the rain is falling on her grave!" One is sad with the denials of her youth and of her tender passion. But to visit the little town where she has lived, and where, near-by, her kinsfolk go about their daily rounds, where the drama of her brief life was enacted, is to feel the dignity of life and the great peace of soul-quietness.

In "William H. Herndon" Masters has crystallized the long retrospect of the man who, better than any other, knew the character of Lincoln after its nature had reached its full maturity and during the period of his professional life. The law-partnership of the two men began in 1843. Lincoln was then thirty-four and Herndon was nine years his junior. Their partnership was dissolved only by the death of the senior member in Ford's Theater in 1865.

Horace White in his introduction to the second edition of the Herndon "Life of Abraham Lincoln" says of the author: "What Mr. Lincoln was after he became President can best be understood by knowing what he was before. The world owes more to Wm. H. Herndon for this particular knowledge than to all other persons taken together. It is no exaggeration to say that his death . . . removed from the earth the person who of all others had most thoroughly searched the sources of Mr. Lincoln's biography and had most attentively, intelligently and also lovingly studied his character."

Mr. Herndon spent his declining years on his farm. The old house, which is, as described, "perched on a bluff," overlooks the Sangamon. It is on what is known thereabout as the Menard County Road. He was seventy-three at the time of his death. He had lived in great times and had seen much history in the making; moreover his last great task had been the preparation, with the assistance of Mr. Jesse W. Weik, of the three volume biography of the man who had engaged

first his admiration, then his love, and afterwards his sense of the patriotic responsibility which his knowledge dictated towards the coming generation.

No line of "Herndon" may be omitted from this work; not the poet's vision of the old man gazing into the shining glass of his memory; nor his vision of the old man's vision; nor the strangely Japanese comprehension of the whole in the association of natural phenomenon:

There by the window in the old house  
Perched on the bluff, overlooking miles of  
valley,  
My days of labor closed, sitting out life's  
decline,  
Day by day did I look in my memory,  
As one who gazes in an enchantress' crystal  
globe,  
And I saw the figures of the past,  
As if in a pageant glassed in a shining  
dream,  
Move through the incredible sphere of time.  
And I saw a man rise from the soil like a  
fabled giant  
And throw himself over a deathless destiny,  
Master of great armies, head of the republic,  
Bringing together in a dithyramb of recreat-  
ive song  
The epic hopes of a people;  
At the same time vulcan of sovereign fires,  
Where imperishable shields and swords are  
beaten out  
From spirits tempered in heaven.  
Look in the Crystal! See how he hastens on  
To the place where his path comes up to  
the path  
Of a child of Plutarch and Shakespeare.  
O Lincoln, actor indeed, playing well your  
part,

And Booth, who strode in a mimic play  
within a play,  
Often and often I saw you,  
As the cawing crows winged their way to  
the woods  
Over my house-top at solemn sunsets,  
There by my window,  
Alone.

## II.

## THE VALLEY OF THE SPOON.

It is interesting to conjecture in considering the geographic nomenclature of the country from which Mr. Masters drew the material for his "Anthology" just why he should have chosen "Spoon River" for the title of his book. There was, for alternative, that lovely Indian name of Sangamon; and Lewistown is a town so closely associated, serving as prototype in fact, that to all intents and purposes Lewistown is "Spoon River." It is true that the characters drawn from this section enormously preponderate numerically; that the name holds in an exceptional degree, by the very fact of its strangeness, what Amy Lowell calls the "pungency of place;" and there is the matter of phonetic syzygy! Is there not a story concerned with Margaret Fuller and her awakened appreciation of the beauties of her own tongue through the admiration of an Italian friend, for that word—so homely of association and so beautiful for the disposal of its consonants and vowels—cellar door? And certainly the name Spoon River, once one has come to love it, whether from the felicity which it confers upon the ear or through the divining vision of its great interpreter—Spoon River is exquisite to say.

Although four or five generations suffice to tell the tale of the Englishman's association with this river, already there has grown up about it, as about those brilliant figures that have passed from the realm of history to high romance, that mass of incident which unconsciously has been shaped by the

synthetic tendencies of the imagination to what the French biographer delights to call a *legend*. Something of evil is implicit, a "power of sinister presence," but withal a loveliness so intimate and compelling that it must lie forever like a mistress upon the heart-memory of those who love her. Certain adjectives inhere: the "classic" Spoon, the "turbid" Spoon, the "treacherous," the "lovely;" but more significant than these, and harking back to an ancienter tradition—the "raging" Spoon. The women have a saying, those old women who sit at windows, that every year the river takes one human life as toll.

It lies in the heart of that rich region embraced by the Mississippi and the Illinois rivers and flowing south and southeast enters, after many sinuations, the latter stream. It has measured, perhaps, in its turnings one hundred and fifty miles, and there is evidence that, with the perverse selection of inanimate things, it has not disdained sometimes to change its course. Three lovely loops of water, reached from the southern end of Thompson's Lake, known as The Horseshoes from the physiographic term applied to such formation, attest that years ago the river approached its point of confluence with the Illinois through closely convoluted turns, reminding one, somehow, of the aesthetic phenomenon involved by certain musical endings where the stress of the impetus is eased by the crashing of conventional chords.

Whatever dramatic moment laid its imperative command upon the genius of the Spoon in that time long past may not definitely be ascertained, but less than a score of years ago the sudden movement of a gigantic ice-pack, opposing exigence to indirection—made a third channel outward entering the Illinois farther to the north by half a mile and approximating to what must have been an earlier estuary. So does the old order forever change and the will of nature, like the will of man, reverse the decision of yesterday.

Although the occupation of the Sangamon and the Spoon River valleys by people from the east and south was contem-

poraneous, the latter region would seem to have offered superior inducements, for it lies in the heart of what is known as the "Military Tract." This tract constitutes all the land embraced by the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers as far as the northern line of Bureau and Henry counties and includes a region of great fertility. By an act of Congress each soldier who had participated in the War of 1812 was entitled to a quarter section and as soon as the provision was made the hardier souls ventured thither to claim their new possessions. Revolutionary soldiers, some of them. Men like "John Wasson":

Oh! the dew-wet grass of the meadow in  
North Carolina  
Through which Rebecca followed me wail-  
ing, wailing,  
Lengthening out the farewell to me off to  
the war with the British,  
And then the long, hard years down to the  
day at Yorktown.  
And then my search for Rebecca,  
Finding her at last in Virginia,  
Two children dead in the meanwhile.  
We went by oxen to Tennessee,  
Thence after years to Illinois,  
At last to Spoon River.  
We cut the buffalo grass,  
We felled the forests,  
We built the school-houses, built the bridges,  
Leveled the roads and tilled the fields  
Alone with poverty, scourges, death....

But if they found hardship here they found a land offering a hospitality that had not failed of the appreciation of their predecessors, for the Indians from the earliest time seem to have shown a predilection for this locality. Although they have not been awarded their just dues at the hands of the state or by its men of science, and much that might constitute a source of intelligence and information

regarding the prehistoric inhabitants of this region has been wasted through agrarian thrift and the wanton plunder of relic hunters, yet there are still visible a number of Indian mounds throughout the valley which the investigation of archeologists has shown to be important. Chapman's "History of Fulton County" says:

There is not a township in the county which does not contain more or less of these traces, and in some of them are works which in extent and character will compare with any in the West.

On a farm in Kerton township, which lies to the right of the mouth of Spoon River, is a field known as Mound Field, containing about twenty-five acres. It is located on the summit of a high bluff. To quote again from Chapman:

In this field is a level space of five or six acres inclosed by two rows of circular, cup-shaped depressions, inside of which are large mounds which must originally have been thirty or forty feet high. To the south of this level the bluff line with its indentations forms the border of the field, and here are the remains of not less than one hundred and fifty thousand human beings buried literally by the cord! Where the bluff begins to descend it appears as though a step had been cut with the bluff face not less than ten feet high, and here were corded skeletons, laid as one would cord wood, but with the bodies arranged just as one would preserve the level of the file best without regard to direction. This burial place follows the bluff line for some distance where skeletons appear to have been covered by some light-colored clay which must have been brought from considerable distance, as it is not found in the locality. There are also two pits near the brow of the bluff on the side hill, which appear to have been originally about forty feet in diameter and of great depth and which have been walled up by placing skeletons around the outside as one would wall

a well, covering the work with the same clay as the other burial place. These skeletons are excellently preserved, in many places the smallest processes of bone being in as good condition as though buried a year ago. Over the entire surface of the field—which is in cultivation—the human hand cannot be placed without putting it on broken pottery, bones and shells.

Passing up the river one finds a great mound near Sepo, observable from the train; the Bernadotte country furnishes interesting terraces of artificial character; and in the region of London Mills are several extensive earth works—undoubtedly pre-historic—that have received little or no attention. Hereabouts, too, is a burying ground of the modern tribe of Pottawatomi, and several Indian skeletons have been found in trees.

Sac, Fox, Chippewa, Kickapoo and Pottawatomi, often mere off-shoots of these nations and lacking tribal coherence, were found here when the pioneers arrived. The rich bottom between California Bend on Spoon River and Liverpool on the Illinois "constituted," says Dr. Strode, of whom I shall speak later, "almost one continuous camp site of ancient as well as modern Indians." The reason for the great popularity of this location he thinks apparent, for as he points out, "the river furnished fish, turtle, water fowl and fur-bearing animals; great forests gave them game, nuts, honey and so forth; and in every ravine were fine springs of water." One township further up the river came to be known as Deerfield because it was literally "the field of the deer"—the habitat of thousands.

The advent of the Frenchman, though unfruitful of much that has made for permanence in America, is still eloquently reminiscent in its nomenclature. In the valley of the Spoon, however, it is nearly lost. Maquon, deriving from a term meaning "big," which is the name they gave to this little river, and "Petite," one of the tributaries, are no more heard; only the lovely "prairie," the "meadow" of our Eng-

lish tongue, persists. "Reeves Prairie," one hears, and "Toten's Prairie," and the names have a pleasant native sound; but "Maquon" first passed into "Mequeen" before an accident fastened its present name upon it, and "Petite" has suffered a like degeneration and is known upon the maps as "Potato Creek."

The legend that concerned itself with the changing of the river's name is to the effect that on a day when a great party of men were rafting on the river a dinner had been prepared beforehand in a great iron pot which should serve to hold the heat until the noon hour. Utensils were limited, and one can imagine the consternation of those hungry men when the spoon—the one spoon which was to serve them all—was somehow dropped overboard. From that small perversity of fate the river's name was changed and it is not the least of the amusing incidents that have changed the face of history. One feels instinctively that there never would have been a "Maquon Anthology". How much, one comes to wonder, how much of destiny is hazard?

The migrations of the pioneers, like those of the Indians, tended always to follow watercourses and progress was marked by the erection of mills. Sawmills and mills for the grinding of grist were established all along the Spoon in the decade denoted by the twenties, the last to be erected representing always the farthest outpost of civilization. At Waterford, Duncan Mills, Bernadotte, Ellisville, Seville and London Mills the turning of the great wheels performed enormous labors and served as social nuclei around which towns invariably were built. Some of those mills still stand, though fallen into decay, and always the riffles in the stream establish hypothetically their location. Not only was the operation of a mill a thriving business in that early day but the capital required for its establishment argued a man of substance. The miller was usually the wealthy man of his community; one of considerable influence, and if, indeed, success came late for the gratification of his own ambitions, he might still hope for their fulfillment through the greater opportunities which his



OLD MILL AT BERNADOTTE.



wealth would give to his boys and girls; nor, in the case of "Oak Tutts," father does one feel these aspirations to have been touched with the ignoble:

My mother was for women's rights  
And my father was the rich miller of Lon-  
don Mills.  
I dreamed of the wrongs of the world and  
wanted to right them.  
When my father died I set out to see peoples  
and countries  
In order to learn how to reform the world.  
I traveled through many lands.  
I saw the ruins of Rome,  
And the ruins of Athens,  
And the ruins of Thebes.  
And I sat by moonlight amid the necropolis  
of Memphis.  
There I was caught up by wings of flame,  
And a voice from heaven said to me:  
"Injustice, Untruth destroyed them. Go  
forth!  
Preach justice! Preach truth!"  
And I hastened back to Spoon River  
To say farewell to my mother before be-  
ginning my work.

But see how the Nemesis of fanaticism finds out this vil-  
lage Hamlet, for:

They all saw a strange light in my eye.  
And by and by, when I talked, they dis-  
covered  
What had come into my mind.  
Then Jonathan Swift Somers challenged me  
to debate  
The subject (I taking the negative);  
"Pontius Pilot, the Greatest Philosopher  
of the World".  
And he won the debate by saying at last,

"Before you reform the world, Mr. Tutt,  
Please answer the question of Pontius Pilate;  
'What is truth?'"'

London Mills is the northermost town of what we have chosen to designate as the Spoon River Country. It lies in a bend of the river whose bank is so thickly wooded that it seems a great green arm about the thriving little town. The trees of London Mills, like all those in this bottom, make a marvelously luxuriant growth, and stand about the lawns and streets with all the dignity that a forest heritage bestows. Across the river from the town I particularly recall one giant elm, conveying by its prodigious height, the great reach of its extended arms and the enormous thickness of its trunk such a look of power and significance that it seemed the number of its centuries alone could not account for its "eternal look", the sense of history it conferred upon the landscape; one felt it to be "part of and related to a mighty past", linked with great destinies and high emprise. It is in the nature of elms to seem to wait but this great patriarch, bearing within it stirring memories of the past, must find it long, with only the vagrancies of fishermen, the whispering of lovers and the small business of the nesting birds, patiently to bide its hour.

Following down the stream from London Mills, passing Ellisville, Babylon and Seville, slipping between the terraced hills that rim the river on the right and the mani-patterned grain-fields on the left, one comes to Bernadotte.

At Bernadotte one lingers with delight, for here one savors in the little drowsing town, so obviously fallen upon the period of its decline, remote in time and place from the bustling life around her, "an aroma, as from wine that has been many years in bottle." Perhaps because her tragedy is the tragedy of arrested growth one senses here more keenly than at any other place along the river the spirit of the pioneers whose ambrotypes "Rutherford McDowell" used to enlarge. Men who were

in being

When giant hands from the womb of the world  
Tore the republic.

William Walters, who was the first settler of Bernadotte township, arrived in 1826. Within five years three mills were built along the Spoon in close proximity, suggesting the feasibility of platting off a town. It is said that Mr. Walters bought the present town-site of Bernadotte for fifty deer skins, but this was, by no means, his most important transaction with the Indians for, though they were fairly treated by the whites, their pilfering, their restlessness, and the lurking spirit of treachery they betrayed made them dangerous neighbors in the end, and their expulsion became a matter of necessity. It was in the curve of the river just above Bernadotte known as Great Bend that they were finally rounded up by the whites under the informal but efficient captaincy of Mr. Walters, driven across the state, across the Mississippi at the point then known as Yellow Banks, the present site of Oquawka and bidden never to return.

For many years Bernadotte thrrove mightily, for not only was she situated in the heart of a rich farming district but the timber on her surrounding hills, the limestone under them, her fishing industry, her two packing houses and many other small, thriving enterprises gave her a commercial life that promised well. Furthermore the natural beauty of her situation upon the river, surrounded by her seven verdant hills made her a pleasure place for all the neighboring towns, and visitors came to her by hundreds on holidays and Sundays through the summer.

It was the coming of the railroad through the country that worked her ruin. For her situation, which had been to her advantage when the river was the chief means of transportation, now proved to be her undoing and her prosperity passed to the towns that were more fortunate.

These were the thorough-going days when the life of trade was sustained by its own resources and the last monument to this period, perhaps, passed with the tearing down of the old covered bridge a few years ago. This bridge, which spanned the Spoon, was put up entirely without the use of steel or iron. The stone for the abutments was quarried

from the vicinity; the selected timber that went to the making of the superstructure was brought from the woods near by having been hewed into shape where it fell; wooden pins bound together the remarkable trusses. A thorough-going bridge, I say, that stood for seventy years and might have stood for seventy more had not the spirit of the times—that strange haunter of men—searched out even this quiet place and demanded fresh tribute, this time of concrete and steel and iron.

The old mill which still stands has lately been put into repair and is now in operation. Above it looms the hill, Mount Pleasant, which commands the town and between them is the ancient hostelry that has served the village for so many years. Together they form the background for that figure touched with pathos and with dignity, “Isaiah Beethoven”:

They told me I had three months to live,  
So I crept to Bernadotte,  
And sat by the mill for hours and hours  
Where the gathered waters deeply moving  
Seem not to move:  
O world, that's you!  
You are but a widened place in the river  
Where life looks down and we rejoice for her  
Mirrored in us, and so we dream  
And turn away, but when again  
We look for the face, behold the low-lands  
And blasted cotton-wood trees where we  
empty  
Into the larger stream!  
But here by the mill the castled clouds  
Mocked themselves in the dizzy water;  
And over its agate floor at night  
The flame of the moon ran under my eyes  
Amid a forest stillness broken  
By a flute in a hut on the hill.  
At last when I came to lie in bed  
Weak and in pain, with dreams about me,



OLD WOODEN BRIDGE AT BERNADOTTE RECENTLY REPLACED BY MODERN  
STRUCTURE.



The soul of the river entered my soul,  
And the gathered power of my soul was  
moving

So swiftly it seemed to be at rest  
Under cities of cloud and under  
Spheres of silver and changing worlds—  
Until I saw a flash of trumpets  
Above the battlements of Time!

Mrs. Maude McCaughey, a fine intelligent women who has kept the hotel for many years, who is familiar with the "Anthology" and many of its characters, assures me that she never had a guest of that strange name. No one in the village had heard of Isaiah Beethoven; but I who have sat for hours by the mill where the "gathered waters, deeply moving seem not to move," and have lain in that chaste room whose hand-woven carpet and woolen quilt evoke the memory of another day and heard the water falling over the dam all through the quiet night—I protest that verisimilitude begets a strange conviction!

Bernadotte was until recent years the home of Dr. William Strode, who is the "William Jones" of the "Anthology." Here, in the old square house upon the river bank, he got together those amazing collections and compiled the data deduced from his tireless researches in the fields of ornithology, conchology and zoology in general. How it was possible despite the demands of his profession—and to add to this, the demands of a large and growing family—to satisfy his scientific instincts and enthusiasms; to attend to his large correspondence, that "converse afar with the great;" for those many contributions to scientific journals; for lectures; for every public enterprise that claimed his sympathy and co-operation—all this is well nigh inconceivable. A glance at the list of his collections fills one with astonishment: Mounted birds, 225; scientific bird skins, 500; fresh water clams or niads, 550 species; fresh water univalves, 400; and these are but the outstanding classifications.

Dr. Strode's work in classifying the mussels of Spoon River is of considerable service, for here are found the largest and finest fresh-water clams in the world, the unionidoae, or niads, having sometimes been found to measure nine and a half inches in length and to weigh nearly three pounds. In recognition of his work in this particular field the United States National Museum has done him the honor to name a species of fresh-water mussel for him—the *Pleurobema Strodiana*. The *Strodiana* is about the size of half of an English walnut and has a beautiful amber colored shell with some striated lines running through it.

Some years ago Dr. Strode sent a consignment of shells to France. By comparison with the depauperate species found in European countries these mussels must have caused considerable astonishment, for the curator of one museum wrote him with delightful hyperbole that his native city of Bonn "was but a small walled town" and that he feared he would not be able to get them into it.

An hour with this wizard of the Spoon spent among his mussel shells is something to remember. There is a story I have heard of a visit which the poet-naturalist Ernest McGaffy once made with him to one of these great clam beds; of Dr. Strode, his sleeves pushed up to his arm-pits, his legs incased in rubber waders, standing for an hour or more in the stream, tossing out one shell after another, fitting each with its scientific name and discoursing familiarly on the subject all the time. It was probably under the impulse of the astonished admiration evoked by this and similar experiences that the poet was moved to write on the fly-leaf of the copy of his "*Poems of Gun and Rod*" which he presented to his friend: "To Dr. Strode, whose knowledge of nature is so comprehensive and various that the little I have learned seems nothing in comparison."

The correspondence of this modest, almost retiring citizen of Bernadotte, and later of Lewistown, brought the world strangely close to this remote community, establishing with points far and wide invisible lines of communication and





MARGARET GEORGE.

many a foreign postmark came to mingle its almost indecipherable legend with "the stamp of Spoon River." In this house was entertained, betimes, the "County Scientific Association" to which "Perry Qoll" so ardently desired admission before his

little brochure

On the intelligence of plants  
Began to attract attention.

and an atmosphere more native to its interests scarcely could have been found. I could find no history of Perry Qoll, but a certain highly intelligent farmer in that community by the name of Henry Qoll is well remembered. Whether or not he ever applied for membership in that organization, it is remembered that he was its occasional host. He used, also, to operate a little steamer on the river—an excursion boat designed to serve the pleasure seekers who came to Bernadotte in the summer time. His character doubtless offered a suggestion to the creative mind of Masters.

But other interests than those of science were served in the hospitable home of the Strodes. The mistress of the house, by her deep and intelligent interest in letters and ideas, and by the charm and magnetism of her personality, drew about her a group of writers and thinkers who already were beginning to find their way into the literature of the day. Edgar Lee Masters and his sister Madeline; Margaret George, whose verse was appearing in such magazines as *The Century*, Lippincott's, *The Atlantic Monthly*; W. T. Davidson, editor of the "Fulton Democrat," published at Lewistown, a lecturer and writer known all over the state; that "Reverend Abner Peet" whose trunk containing "the manuscript of a lifetime of sermons" suffered such ruthless destruction at the hands of "Burchard the grog-keeper," the Reverend Stephen Peet, in fact, a man of much distinction, editor of "The American Antiquarian and Oriental Magazine"; Ernest McGaffy and his wife, and many others. Mrs. Strode, herself a writer, was even during those busy years contributing to such magazines as "The Youth's Com-

panion" and "The Boston Educator," and a more ambitious enterprise was under way. One glimpses a social and intellectual preoccupation that must have been surprisingly inspiring.

But lest the associations of Bernadotte leave us heavy it is well to recall that from the country hereabouts that "rugged nurse" the soil has produced many characters untrammelled by a too great refinement. There was, for instance, that great bully of "The Spooniad"—

hog-eyed Allen, terror of the hills,  
That looked on Bernadotte....

No man of this degenerate day could lift  
The boulder which he threw, and when he  
spoke

The windows rattled, and beneath his brows,  
Thatched like a shed with bristling hairs of  
black,

His small eyes glistened like a maddened  
boar.

As he walked the boards creaked, as  
he talked

A song of menace rumbled.

Yes, there were lusty spirits in the Valley of the Spoon!

### III.

#### OLD LEWISTOWN.

Lewistown, the first town to be established in Fulton County, was just turning its half century when there came to bide within its gates that small uneasy guest—a child who wondered. What his welcome would have been had the citizens of this place had intimation of his brooding genius is an interesting point of speculation, for although the distinction which the author of the "Anthology" conferred upon the town is indubitable, yet by its publication it cannot be denied that, like "Percival Sharp," he "stirred certain vibrations in Spoon River." The plaint of "Zarathustra," "The

poets lie too much," has found its echo here in sad reversal.

Mr. Masters has told us that he was twelve years of age when he came to Lewistown, and ten years of his life were lived here, but whether the two hundred and fourteen characters that went to the creation of the book which was to herald him to fame some twenty-three years after his departure from the town, were the result of conscious memory or merely of "that inward shaping force" which psychologists tell us is the tenure of the formative period, one feels that these were years of tremendous significance; that the moment that compassed the awakening of his intellectual and of his sense life, in a community somewhat alien to him, was precisely that which the virginal curiosity of the child and the dream power of the poet should convert to the ends of art. These years that were filled with wonder and speculation; with Burns and Poe and Keats and Shelly; with the infinite pains and experimentation that produced four hundred poems—these years gave him, if nothing else as net result, that most delicate of all the materials of genius, the very corner stone of his abounding fame, the idiom of a people.

Though the spectacle that inspired the "Anthology" grew out of the small trade and petty enterprise of those lean years following the Civil War, the poet has paid tribute to the pioneers and to that stalwart generation following them as the epitaphs of "Judge Somers," "Washington McNeely," "Herndon" and many others show; and no poet that America has produced, not even excepting Whitman, has voiced so constantly a sense of the pageantry which an intimate knowledge of her history inspires.

The period of Masters was contemporaneous with the third generation in the life of Lewistown—the shirt-sleeve period if you will. It was his good fortune to arrive upon a time rich in anecdote and through this medium he came to an amazingly intimate comprehension of its historic background. His association with the people of the town and country in his school and social life, his knowledge of the

petty political intrigues—the scandals of the court-house circle—which his father's position as one of the leading lawyers of the town opened to him, gave him the immediate present; and the many intervening years between the incidents that concern the lives of his characters and the “moment of invention” proved, no doubt, that very important period of transition involving the phenomenon familiar in all creative work—the translation of the concrete into terms of the abstract, and back again, through the medium of art to the concrete. A process implying a little loss compensated by an enormous gain; a rediscovery of incident touched only with significance; a fealty that concerns itself with life, rather than with fact.

In all essential ways the characters of the “Anthology” are re-created. It is true that nearly all of those two hundred and fourteen names in the table of contents—the invention of which has elicited the astonished admiration of his critics—may be found on the tombstones, in the telephone books, and on topographical maps of the Spoon River country, but with the exception of perhaps a scant dozen, they are names re-assembled, re-created in composite like the characters they represent. The psychology involving the relation of a name to the personality denoted by it is not yet fully comprehended, but almost everyone has felt the matter to have significance. George Moore once pointed out that all lyric poets have beautiful names—names abounding in vowels and liquids—Alfred Tennyson, Charles Algernon Swinburne, Dante, Gabriel Rosetti; but Thackery! Thackery is of course a novelist inspired by the acrid spirit of the ironic—a satirist by the very force of his name. A whimsey of course, but an idea opening a field of speculation that is not without its importance. It was his theory that a man's work proceeds from his name.

Apparently to Mr. Masters names have stood, first of all, for locality, but no fixed method of characterization is discernable. Sometime by the substitution of a single letter or by the transposition of one, a character true both to

fact and life seems clearly indicated; sometimes by the combination of a distinctive Christian name and a surname two characters will appear to be suggested and again, by an allusion to some apparently unimportant incident—a cage of canaries or a cedar tree on the lawn—the identity of the character involved will, to those long familiar with the town, seem to be implied.

All such “identifications” are confusing and, for the most part, misleading. Excepting a very limited number of characters, only suggestions have been furnished by the people of Spoon River—suggestions from which the creative mind of the poet has evolved a community so genuine and so significant that “Spoon River” has been said to transcend locality and to belong to the very “Comedie Humaine” of life itself.

It is, perhaps, because the “Anthology” is so intensely local that it may claim to be so largely universal, reminding one of that paradox of Masters’ applied to Lincoln in his “Autochthon”

O great patrician, therefore fit to be  
Great democrat as well!

The people of Spoon River have, by inadvertence, paid tribute to Mr. Masters’ authenticity of vision by their prompt and sometimes resentful recognition of the personnel of his book. One is reminded of the situation in which Charles Dickens found himself after having projected his Yorkshire schoolmaster—Mr. Squeers—upon the pages of his “Nicholas Nickelby.” Mr. Squeers was, in fact, a creature made from scraps of memory; from impressions received when—and here the analogy continues—he was a “not very robust child, sitting in by-places,” and synthesized into a type—but a type so telling that more than one Yorkshire schoolmaster laid claim to being the original. One even consulted a solicitor as to the grounds on which he might obtain redress, as if he coveted the honor of establishing in that way the association with his name of the ignorance and brutal cupidity for which that character is synonym.

Such a predicament, though embarrassing, is, in a sense, the highest praise. Mr. Masters' small town is—the average small town. His studies include ten or twelve social groups, two doctors, half a dozen lawyers, ten or twelve politicians, two editors, two bankers, several poets, artists and fiddlers, four preachers, seven prostitutes, two nymphomaniacs and a scattering of hypermorons beside the great number of characters not lending themselves readily to classification. An average grouping perhaps for a town of twenty-five hundred.

It is unfortunate for the fair name of Lewistown that the untutored mind is prone to oversensitiveness in the contemplation of morbid psychology. There is no doubt that such a character as "Henry Wilmans" infinitely outweighs in its impressiveness a half dozen such characters as "Thomas Trevelyan," "William and Emily," and "Aaron Hatfield." Even so unprovincial a critic as Miss Lowell has been impelled to wonder "if life in our little Western cities is as bad as this why everyone does not commit suicide." "Spoon River," she declares, "is one long chronicle of rapes, seductions, liaisons and perversions," and gravely adds that "it is a great blot upon Mr. Masters' work. It is an obliquity of vision, a morbidness of mind which distorts an otherwise remarkable picture."

That Miss Lowell believed herself to be discussing "Hanover, Illinois," absolves her from imputation of personal malice, but a careful scrutiny of the matter reveals not more than sixty-five out of the two hundred and fourteen characters in the book to be, according to Shavian classification, "unpleasant." Mr. Masters is, without doubt, in the "Anthology" as in his later books, preoccupied with pathology, but sixty-five out of two hundred and fourteen does not, perhaps, represent a ratio disproportionate to the conditions of life itself—and more than with pathology, Mr. Masters is preoccupied with *Life*.

Lewistown by no means predisposes to suicide. Its streets are tree-embowered and "wonderful for grass." Its

business houses are ranged about the square, in the center of which stands the courthouse. A fountain splashes in a park near by, and here and there about the town stand the dignified old mansions of that steadfast second generation that had its share—and that no mean one—in shaping the destiny of the nation in the moment of her greatest peril. Reaching out from it toward the east and south and west are stretches of lovely hill country declining gently towards the valleys of the Spoon and the Illinois; while to the north are great expanses of prairie, those fertile farmlands, "fair as the garden of the Lord." Decidedly, Lewistown does not predispose to suicide.

If a town, like an institution, is "the lengthened shadow of a man" then Lewistown may be said to measure the moral stature of Ossian M. Ross. He was the first soldier of the War of 1812 to claim his quarter section in the Military Tract, but he was not the first adventurer into this promised land. He found there before him a certain John Eveland located upon the banks of Spoon River and he, in turn, had been preceded by a figure so vague in outline as to be almost legendary: a Dr. Davison, a recluse and misanthrope whose one desire was to be alone; a man of considerable culture as his speech and the refinements of his cabin showed. He lingered only a little while after the influx of people from the East began, moving to the Starved Rock country, where, eventually, he died. So romantic and mysterious a figure he seemed, so strangely touched with tragedy that Mr. W. T. Davidson wrote a novel founded on his character, called "*The Hermit*". He published the story in his paper the *Fulton Democrat*, and within the present year, his daughters who have continued the paper since his death, at the instance of a number of the "faithful readers" have run it again in its columns. Strangely enough an accident has discovered to them, within the last few months, that the purely conjectural hypothesis upon which Mr. Davidson based the hegira of his hero to the land of wilderness—a tragedy of his love life—was correct.

The tale is chiefly valuable as a commentary upon the life and manners of that early day. A description of Dr. Davidson's ascent of the Spoon may be of interest here and taken as a fairly faithful picture of that wilding stream. It must be remembered that Editor Davidson was writing in the splendid adjectiverous nineties.

"The sun was going down on a delicious summer day—going down beneath an enchanted western forest of giant oaks, elms, sycamores and walnuts. The eastern shore of the river was hills and sand; a little way above an emerald isle (the little detached strip of land that is called Cuba) on the west, and beneath the arches of great trees a smaller clear shining river.

"'It is the River Mequeen', and the doctor stood up hat in hand; and bowing low he gently said, 'My queen!'

"But four oars swept the boat forward swiftly, constantly, round the bends of beautiful clear water; the pebbles many feet below were plainly seen; the water seemed full of fish; at every turn there was something new to admire. The glistening white sandbanks; the great trees drooping over the silvery stream as though to protect and bless it; through forest aisles an occasional glimpse of the gorgeous prairies to the east or the bold and glorious hills to the south and west—the almost deafening chorus of the birds! There were no vandals to shoot or stone them in those days. Every tree was a song-bird's home. They passed many herds of red deer and turkey."

This description, barring the deer and turkey, and possibly the clearness of the water—for the Spoon takes toll of many farm lands—is quite as true now as then, though no mention is made of the luxuriant growth of vines that give the river an almost tropical aspect. The place is still a paradise for birds: cardinals, orioles and prothonotory warblers flash their gold and crimson back and forth across the stream; the red-winged blackbird flaunts his brilliant shoulders from the topmost branch; the tanager, that velvet miracle, flits from spray to spray of overhanging bough, holding you fast

with the tantalizing seduction of his black and scarlet. Many curves of the river hold in a close embrace timbered thickets so dense with vine and implicated undergrowth—the haunt of bats and owls and creeping things—that they seem to offer the challenge of the “Woods of Westermain”,

Enter these enchanted woods

You who dare!

Ossian M. Ross came to Illinois from Seneca, New York, in 1820. He brought with him, besides his family—a wife and three children—a blacksmith, a carpenter, a shoemaker and several other workmen and their families. His first pause was at Alton on the Mississippi but after a year spent at that place he decided to push on toward the ultimate objective, followed the Mississippi northward to the Illinois, ascended that river as far as the mouth of the Spoon, and penetrated inland on the waters of that stream to a point adjacent to the section to which he was entitled in the “bounty lands”.

Mr. Harvey Ross, a son of Ossian Ross, who published in his declining years a book called “The Early Pioneers and Pioneer Events of the State of Illinois” has written with delightful attention to the importance of minutiae:

“My father on examining his map found that his land was about six miles north of Mr. Eveland’s place. He took some of his men, and with his compass, chain and field notes had no trouble in locating his land. Father selected the quarter section north of Lewistown for our home, and built a log house on the north side of a little creek that ran through the land, and near a fine clear spring of water. The location was sixty rods northeast from Major Walker’s present residence.”

Writing of Mr. Eveland, who was the first to welcome them to the country, and incidentally glimpsing the crudity and hardship of these early days, he says:

“Mr. Eveland had a large family of ten or twelve children, part of them grown. They had some twenty acres in cultivation, and were engaged in raising stock. They had come into this country from Calhoun county,

making the trip up the Illinois and Spoon River partly by land and partly by water. Before leaving Calhoun county they constructed a pirogue (a large canoe). It was hewed out of a cottonwood tree. The length of the boat was forty feet, and was about four feet wide. It was run by sail and also by oars. On this craft they shipped their hogs and also their goods.

"This pirogue is entitled to more particular attention, because it was put to many uses of convenience and utility among the early settlers. It was the first craft used to carry people across the Illinois River at the mouth of Spoon River, and it was the first craft that the Phelpses used" (we shall come to the Phelpses later on) "in shipping their first stock of goods from St. Louis to Lewistown, and this was the first stock of goods ever brought to Fulton County. This pirogue was also used by the early settlers to run down Spoon River to the Illinois River, and thence down the Illinois River to the mouth of the Sangamon River, and then up the Sangamon to Sangamon town, where there was a watermill to which our people took their grain to be ground into breadstuff. A great deal of skill had been used in digging out and constructing this pirogue. For years it took the place of the magnificent steamboat and railway trains that later generations employed."

When Mr. Ross came to the present site of Lewistown, all that country lying between the Mississippi and the Illinois rivers and extending to the northern boundary of the state was included in the county of Pike. Mr. Ross immediately took steps to effect the organization of Fulton County, and by 1823 he had accomplished not only this but the town of Lewistown had been platted from the quarter section which came to him from the government, and had been established as the county seat. In 1825 Peoria county also was carved out of this great territory, but until that time the whole northern portion of the state, including people from Ft. Dearborn (now Chicago) had had to come to Lewistown for marriage, tavern, and ferry licenses; to pay their taxes, and do all the

county business. The old court record book for 1823 gives under the date of June 6th:

"On motion it was ordered that Ossian M. Ross have license to keep an inn or tavern in the house where he now resides in said county by paying the sum of ten dollars in state paper.

"On motion it was ordered that the following be the list of tavern rates, to-wit: victuals 25c, horsekeeping per night  $37\frac{1}{2}$ c, lodging per night  $12\frac{1}{2}$ c, whiskey per half pint  $12\frac{1}{2}$ c, rum and gin per half pint 25c; French brandy per half pint 50c, wine per half pint  $37\frac{1}{2}$ c, and all other liquors in like proportion."

On the record book for January 27th, 1823, we find three county commissioners "having been appointed agreeable to the act of Congress" reporting among other matters, the donation by Ossian M. Ross to "said County of Fulton a good warrantee deed in fee simple for the following town lots for public buildings." These lots are for the site of a court house and jail, for a "burying yard", for a meeting house, a school house, a Masonic Hall and not less than six lots for a "public Sqear."

Having thus generously dowered the town which he had named for his little son Lewis, and helped to put in motion the machinery of civilization in this new country, Mr. Ross, at the end of the decade, moved to new pastures across the Illinois, and there, at a point just opposite to the mouth of Spoon River, gave himself afresh to the labors of organization and established the town of Havana, at which place he lived until his death.

The first merchant to open a store in the newly platted town was Judge Stephen Phelps. He came with his five sons from Sangamon County in 1824, to which place they had arrived from Palmyra, New York, four years earlier. A few months later he was joined by his son-in-law John W. Proctor and his wife. The Phelps and Proctor families have been closely associated ever since, through marriage and business affiliations. When Judge Phelps was established he took his

son Myron into partnership with him and the store came to be known under the name of "Phelps and Son". In time the daughter of Myron Phelps married Charles Proctor, a relative of John W. Proctor, and he became a member of the firm; Henry, the son of Myron Phelps, ultimately succeeded to his father's place and the firm name became "Phelps and Proctor"; and finally, on the retirement of Mr. Phelps, Mr. Proctor took his son Charles, Jr., now grown to manhood, into partnership and he is now in active management of the store which is approaching its centennial.

The sons of Judge Phelps were, like their father, naturally adapted to the mercantile business. Charles and Myron remained with him in the store at Lewistown; Sumner and Alexis went to Yellow Banks—now Oquawka—on the Mississippi where they established a Trading Post, but William, in whom the spirit of adventure predominated, found abundant opportunity for its exercise in the operation of the Indian trade about Lewistown. Much of the Phelps' business, both at Lewistown and at Yellow Banks was Indian trade and the preeminence of their success in dealing with the red-skins was due to their honesty and their unfailing kindness to them. Although the valleys of both the Spoon and the Illinois Rivers were thickly populated with the Indians, yet many came from great distances, and Judge Phelps kept a house for the exclusive accommodation of such. Mrs. Phelps, too, had a motherly eye upon them and no squaw or papoose ever lacked for care or food while within her province.

But especially beloved among these people was the young son of the Judge and Mrs. Phelps, William. Although he was but sixteen when he first arrived in Lewistown, he had attained the height and proportion of a full-sized man; his great strength, together with his athletic taste and skill, won the admiration of the young braves and he entered with them into their games, wrestling, running and target practice and sometimes joined them on hunting and fishing trips. They gave him the name of Che-che-pin-e-quah, meaning powerful shoulders, arms and neck. His



CAPTAIN WILLIAM PHELPS.  
"Che-che-pin-e-quah."



hands, they said, were like a woman's but having the grip of a bear.

Che-che-pin-e-quah's popularity with the Indians stood him in good stead when his father allotted him their trade for his portion of the business. So impatient he was to prove himself that instead of waiting for the furs and other peltry to be brought to him he went out among the Indian villages and collected it from them and soon had a great shipment, and was off without delay to St. Louis to market it.

At first a canoe was used for transportation; then a raft was requisitioned and poles and sails were employed; but afterwards as the trade became more extensive and the values of the furs increased, better transportation facilities became necessary, so this intrepid youth, now arrived at the age of nineteen, purchased a first class river boat which he christened "The Pavilion," and which he anchored at Havana.

His cargoes by this time were considerable. Mr. Harvey Ross tells of seeing the boat loaded at one time. He says: "The cargo consisted of barrels of pork and honey, packages of deer-skins and furs, barrels of dried venison, hams, beeswax and tallow, sacks of pecans, hickory nuts, ginseng, feathers and dry hides." Ordinarily four days were required to make the trip to St. Louis, but adverse conditions of weather and high water so increased the difficulties of transportation that several weeks were occupied with the trip. The brothers at Oquawka patronized the boat and the return trip brought supplies to the Lewistown store. In his twenty-fourth year Mr. Phelps—who was now and always afterward known as Captain Phelps—married Miss Caroline Kelsey of Lewistown, and went with her into the wilds of Iowa, where he established a trading point near the present site of Des Moines—a post which he maintained for sixteen years. It was from this period of his life that Mr. W. T. Davidson and Miss Margaret George drew the material for their novel called "The Yellow Rose," taking their title from the name which the Indians gave to the lovely blond woman who was the Captain's wife.

These years on the frontier were filled with adventure and enterprise. No fur trader of his time was more favorably nor better known than Captain Phelps. The volume of his business was enormous, his customers among the Indians extending as far as the Rocky Mountains. He was universally trusted by the people among whom he dealt and the confidence which he gained at this time made him of signal service to the Government at the time of the Black Hawk war. He was a warm personal friend not only of Black Hawk but of the chief who was to succeed him, Keokuk, and although he joined Captain Gains' company of Illinois Volunteers at the beginning of the Indian trouble, his sympathy for the red men and their desire to recover the territory lost through the ignorance and cupidity of their chiefs, never failed him. At the close of the war, and after he was released from his confinement at Fort Monroe, Black Hawk returned to his people and eventually built himself a house, after the manner of the white man, near the home of Captain Phelps. But the old chief was disheartened. His power was gone; his old home in the Rock River country lost to him forever, and in few months he died. It is probable that in his passing Black Hawk left no friend who grieved his loss more sincerely, nor who afterwards did his memory greater honor than Che-che-pin-e-quah.

During the time of the Indian troubles Captain Phelps' boat was requisitioned to help in the removal of captive Indians and of their squaws and papooses up the Mississippi and across to the western side where their new territory was located. On one of these trips an incident occurred that evermore endeared him to the Indian people. There had been a great bustle and confusion in getting the Indians on board, and by some chance two squaws had left their babies behind asleep in their wigwams. The boat was well under way when they discovered their loss and in great excitement and distress, their black hair disheveled, tears running down their cheeks and milk streaming from their breasts, they rushed to the captain—their one sure friend—and implored him to return. He immediately reassured the frantic women,

rang the bell, ordered the boat back to shore, and the papooses were restored to their mothers, to their great joy and immeasurable relief. Later on, when the Indian troubles were at an end, the two squaws brought their little rescued boys to the trading post for the Captain to see, and to repeat again and again expressions of gratitude; nor did they fail to find many services of kindness to render him, his wife and his children in after years.

In 1846 Captain Phelps sold his trading post and boat and returned to Lewistown where, as also at Havana and Ipava, he entered the mercantile business, built an elevator on Spoon River, operated the ferry across the Illinois at Havana and, after the Civil War—during which period he served as Provost Marshal for his Congressional district—bought many acres of the hill country about the Spoon, and there, where in his boyhood he had visited the wigwams of his Indian friends, put his herds to graze. In his later life, ten years after the death of the "Yellow Rose," he married Miss Tillie M. Guernsey, a woman of much cultivation, whose affection still keeps green the memory of this remarkable man. The Indian friends of Che-che-pin-e-quah never forgot him, nor failed to avail themselves of every opportunity to send him messages of greeting. His old friend Keokuk had died soon after the Captain's departure from the trading post, but Chief Joe of a later generation, with his two wives and several children, once planned to visit him. They had reached Peoria when the illness of one of the children necessitated their turning back and the trip, much to the regret of both the Captain and his Indian friends, was never consummated.

The long adventurous life of this man would furnish a volume of fascinating tales. He was, himself, a famous story teller and one who never hesitated to turn a point against himself. There is one which he used to tell as illustrating his belief in the efficacy of prayer.

As a boy he had visited the lead mines of Galena where his brother Myron had certain interests. Once, when walking over the rough country thereabouts, his attention was

attracted by an eagle circling high above him. Thinking to discover its eyrie, he kept his eye upon the bird and inadvertently wandered out of the beaten path and stumbled into one of the open pits. The moment was a perilous one; the rough stone ledge on which he had been able to fasten his hold was crumbling beneath his weight; below him, for all he knew, yawned a bottomless abyss, and in that frantic moment he searched his memory for prayer. The Lord's Prayer escaped him, but his childhood's supplication was too firmly rooted in subconsciousness to desert him now, and there, hanging by his hands, this great strapping youth prayed, "Now I lay me down to sleep." At that point his hold gave way and he fell, helpless but unscathed, to the bottom of the pit—a distance of perhaps four feet!

#### IV.

##### OLD LEWISTOWN—CONTINUED.

Perhaps the next man of importance to take up his abode in Lewistown, one who was to keep for many years a shaping hand upon her destinies, was he who is referred to in the introductory poem of the "Anthology," "The Hill," as

Major Walker who had talked

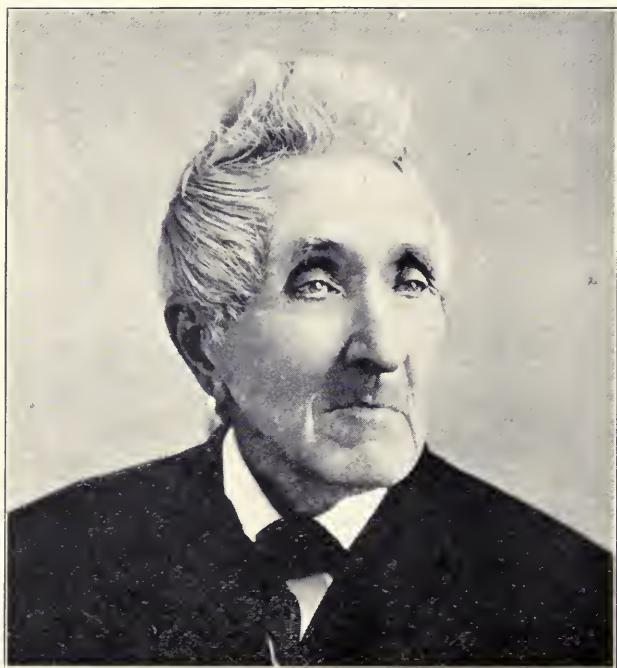
With venerable men of the revolution.

His death occurred as late as 1897 and his memory, which remained undimmed to the last, covered with wonderful clearness and precision nine decades of a century.

Major Walker was a native of Virginia, and a man who already had arrived at considerable distinction when he came to Illinois for, while yet but twenty-one, as Major in the state militia, he had been appointed to the command of the escort of Lafayette when that great man paid his fourth visit to this country in 1824, accompanying him during almost all of that triumphal trip through Virginia.

In 1835 the Major, then a man of thirty-two, came with his bride of a year to Illinois and to Lewistown. He subsequently built a commodious house on the very place that Ossian Ross had left five years earlier, and there he lived out, in dignity and unfailing usefulness, his remaining years.





MAJOR WALKER  
"Who Talked With the Men of the Revolution."

In politics the Major was a Whig of most uncompromising conviction, schooled in the school of great statesmen and great men. In Virginia he had listened to such men as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Randolph and Henry Clay; and in the new land to which he had adventured he was to meet and to hold in the close intimacy of an abiding friendship one whose destiny was to carry him to infinitely greater heights—Abraham Lincoln.

Major Walker's acquaintance with Lincoln began in 1838 when both were serving in the Legislature in the old State Capitol at Vandalia. Adlai E. Stevenson, in an address on Stephen A. Douglas which he delivered before the Illinois State Historical Society, said of that body:

“The Tenth General Assembly was the most notable in Illinois history. Upon the roll of members of the House, in the old capitol at Vandalia, were names inseparably associated with the history of the State and the Nation. From its list were yet to be chosen two Governors of the Commonwealth, one member of the Cabinet, three Justices of the Supreme Court of the State, eight Representatives in Congress, six Senators, and one President of the United States. That would indeed be a notable assemblage of law makers in any country or time, that included in its membership: McCleernand, Edwards, Ewing, Semple, Logan, Hardin, Browning, Shields, Baker, Stuart, Douglas and Lincoln.”

The chief measure before the Legislature at this time concerned the building of the Illinois Central Railroad, a bill having been introduced to obtain from Congress grants of land to aid in its construction. This measure, which Major Walker felt to be disastrous to the fortunes of the state, was warmly approved by Lincoln, showing even in that early day his certain vision and statesmanship, for it was the very success of this measure that contributed more, perhaps, than any other issue of that day, to the great prosperity of Illinois. Those familiar with this period in the state's history will remember how the completion of the road marked the beginning of an era of marvelous development in Illinois and gave a

new impetus to all lines of industrial progress. The five years following the passage of that bill saw an increase in the population of the state from nine hundred thousand to near one and a half million, and the prosperity of the state was assured. The final passage of the bill was due chiefly to the labors of Stephen A. Douglas, though Justice Breese had advocated the measure in a former session.

The friendship established between Major Walker and Lincoln at Vandalia was augmented during the following assembly to which they were both re-chosen from their respective counties: The Capital, in the meantime, had been removed to Springfield and it was while the two were attending Legislature there that the intimacy grew and became for the Major a fruitful source of reminiscence in the years that followed.

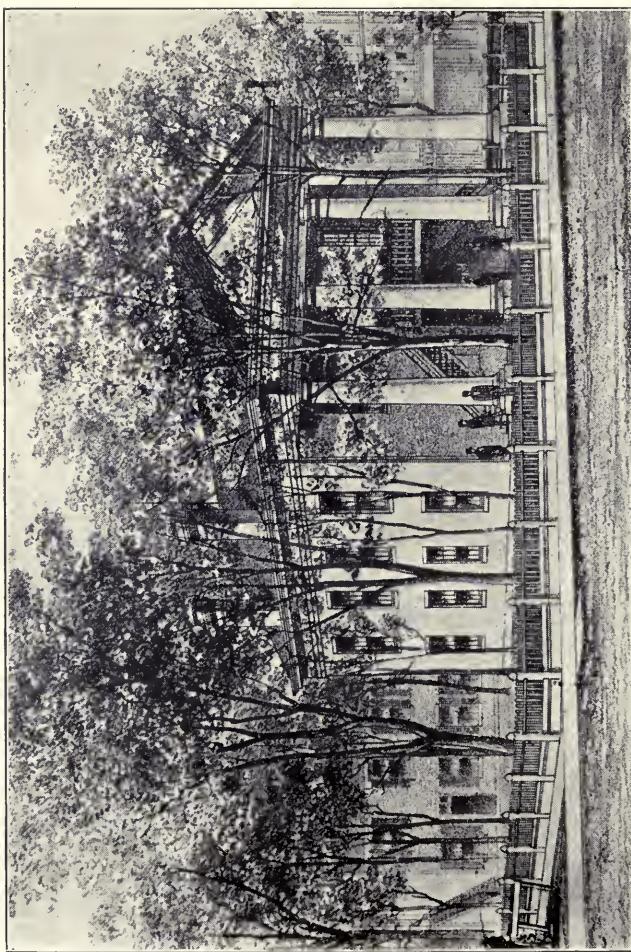
In an interview which Mr. Francis M. Love of Lewistown had with him in 1895, he spoke of the evenings when Lincoln would come to his room and how, when tired of telling stories he would ask for a little music and he, the Major, would play for him. Also when he went to see Lincoln the beloved fiddle would go along. It was not all stories and fiddling though. Many grave matters were discussed and among them the one that always transcended all others—the question of human slavery.

On one of these visits Lincoln bantered the Major for a wrestling match. The Major was a fine figure of a man, almost as tall as Lincoln and well proportioned, but he was no wrestler. He referred him, however, to his friend and colleague Jonas Rawalt. Rawalt, who shared with Walker the leadership of the Whig party in Fulton County, was a man of smaller build and for that reason Lincoln demurred. The Major, however, assured him that he need not stand back on that account; Rawalt accepted the challenge and the match was on. Lincoln, given his choice of the holds, chose the back hold which was just what Rawalt wanted.

“Did Lincoln throw him?” asked Mr. Love.

“Well, I guess not” laughed the Major, enjoying the affair afresh in reminiscence.





OLD COURT HOUSE WHICH "SILAS DEMENT" BURNED.

"Throw Rawalt? I guess not! There was not a man in that Legislature could do that. Rawalt threw Lincoln before you could count ten to save you. You see Rawalt came from the logging country in Illinois where he had a great reputation as a wrestler. Lincoln laughed as heartily as any of us over the incident."

An amusing affair which the Major liked to laugh over was in reference to a temperance lecture that was held in the old Free Mason Hall in Lewistown. Lincoln had been asked to address the meeting, but he was trying a case that evening before Judge Douglas. "So," said the Major, "Lincoln asked Cal Winchel, another visiting attorney, to go over and make the speech for him. He knew that Winchel was a drinking man but thought he would make a very fine temperance speech. When he had finished speaking they passed the pledge around for Cal Winchel to sign.

"What?" says Cal, 'me sign that? Well, I guess not. You don't find me doing anything so foolish as to sign a temperance pledge. Why,' he said, 'I'd rather be shot than sign it!'

"Lincoln," continued the Major, "used to tell the story often on Cal Winchel who afterward became a judge and a good one, but never, so far as I know, quit drinking."

Lewistown has boasted four court houses in its time, but the one that is always referred to as the "old Court House," the one round which the pleasantest memories cluster, the one which "Silas Dement" burned on that moonlight night (December 14th, 1895), was designed and built under the direction of Major Walker in 1838; one John Tomkins, being the master-builder. It was burned on the Major's ninetieth birthday.

The court house burning is one of the several dramatic foci which give to the "Anthology" almost the suggestion of a plot. It directly involved the fortunes of at least three characters of the book: "Silas Dement," who performed the incendiary deed, "W. Lloyd Garrison Standard" who defended the "patriot scamps" who planned the affair, and "A. E. Culbertson" who voiced his disaffection from the grave that "Editor Wheadon" and "Thomas Rhodes"

should be given a tablet of bronze while his own contributions of labor and money toward the building of the new temple

are but memories among the people

Gradually fading away, and soon to descend

With them to this oblivion where I lie.

None of these names in any way suggests the principals involved in the court house scandal, nor did the "Silas Dement" of the actual occurrence suffer incarceration in the penitentiary at Joliet, though a certain "presumptive delinquent" laid in jail for a season pending trial; but there is no one in Lewistown or Fulton county not familiar with one version or another of the alleged plot arising out of one of the town's epic struggles to retain the county seat. In 1878 her claim had been contested by Canton, a thriving manufacturing town in the county; in 1888 Cuba, another avid neighbor, sought to win the prize; and pending the rounding of another ten years, Canton was supposed again to be casting covetous eyes in her direction. It seemed obvious that some drastic measure must be resorted to. If the old court house should be destroyed and a new one built before the time arrived for the next contest it was fairly certain that the County would not consent to a fresh draft upon her funds for many years to come. However that may have been the court house burned, and there was a great scandal. Certain prominent men were tried for conspiracy, but nothing came of that. The county refused to shoulder the expense of a new building and the new court house was built by private subscriptions from citizens of Lewistown and the immediate vicinity.

The event of that night in December of 1895 as described by "Silas Dement" is a dramatic one:

It was moon-light, and the earth sparkled  
With new-fallen frost.

It was midnight and not a soul was abroad.  
Out of the chimney of the court house  
A grey-hound of smoke leapt and chased  
The northwest wind.  
I carried a ladder to the landing of the stairs

And leaned it against the frame of the trap-door

In the ceiling of the portico

And I crawled under the roof amid the rafters

And flung among the seasoned timbers

A lighted handful of oil-soaked waste.

Then I came down and slunk away.

In a little while the fire-bell rang—

Clang! Clang! Clang!

And the Spoon River ladder company

Came with a dozen buckets and began to pour water

In the glorious bon-fire, growing hotter,

Higher and brighter, till the walls fell in,

And the limestone columns where Lincoln stood

Crashed like trees when the woodman fells them.

When I came back from Joliet

There was a new court house with a dome.

For I was punished like all who destroy

The past for the sake of the future.

The building which Major Walker had designed upon the lines which the Virginians had adapted from the old Greek ideals—the rectangular structure relieved by four great pillars in front—was a thing to please the eye, being both simple and dignified. Its upper story was originally reached by means of a circular stairway on the inside, but the danger and inconvenience of that arrangement soon urged the advisability of having the stairway placed on the outside from under the deep portico. The total cost of the building was only eight thousand dollars, and it is amusing to discover that those great columns which were quarried from the Spoon River bottom, cost but one and a half dollars a section. It is not true, as “Silas Dement” would have us believe, that in the fire they “Crashed like trees when the woodman fells them”. They were in fact left standing and the two central ones—the pillars between which Lincoln stood to make his great speech

in 1858—were afterwards removed to the cemetery and there erected as a memorial inscribed “To Our Patriot Dead”. The others may be found in sections, placed here and there about the town, used chiefly as mounting-blocks before the houses of the citizens who hold the old building in beloved memory.

The old court house, from its very earliest history cherished the tradition of great men. As early as the forties Judge Stephen A. Douglas was presiding at the Fulton County court and Edward Dickinson Baker (the beloved “Ned Baker,” “the silver tongued”) frequently plead before its bar. Mr. W. T. Davidson, in his “Famous Men I Have Known in the Military Tract” says of him:

“From my sixth or seventh year I vividly recall that splendid specimen of young manhood as he appeared in the old court-house, always crowded by people of the county who came to meet their favorite party leaders and to feast upon their oratory.

“But Ned Baker was in a class by himself. If he only spoke for five minutes to court on some point of law, the crowded court room was all attention. But if in a murder case he spoke for hours his audience was thrilled to the verge of collapse. Two-thirds of a century has passed, but I can see that straight, lithe, blond, graceful youth as he swayed his audience, jurors, the bar and even the judge upon the bench with the music of his voice and his word-pictures, his irresistible logic, his illustrations, and the unconscious, spontaneous, fervid oratory that come as fresh to me as when a child —like the musk of an ancient queen that fills her apartment an age since she is dead.

“Glorious Ned Baker, who led our Illinois troops from victory to victory in Mexico, and while a United States Senator from Oregon, was shot dead at Ball’s Bluff in 1861 while leading a brigade in that heroic battle for the Union.”

General James Shields was a familiar figure here. He was not only a great orator and a great soldier, but was

afterwards distinguished as the only American to be chosen as United States Senator from three states. When Stephen A. Douglas resigned from the bench of the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois he was appointed by the Governor to fill his unexpired term. Francis O'Shaughnessy, in an address delivered at the dedication of the monument to General Shields at Carrollton, Missouri, November 12th, 1914, said:

"Shields' fame might have been locked up in the sheepskins of law libraries had not President Polk called him from the Supreme Bench to the office of Commissioner General of the Land Office of the United States. He had just set to work in a broad, intelligent way to administer the affairs of this big office when the annexation of Texas, followed by a chain of rapid events, culminated in a war with Mexico."

Judge William Kellogg came to Canton, Illinois, in the early forties and Fulton County claimed him until 1863 when he went to Peoria. No man of his period had a surer grasp of the politics of the time, nor a more prophetic vision. He was Lincoln's closest friend and advisor from the birth of the Republican party until his (Kellogg's) retirement from his third term of Congress in 1857. Lincoln was himself, of course, in attendance on almost every term of court through these years.

But not only could the bar of Fulton County boast visitors of distinction; these splendid forties saw also the development of a number of Lewistown's citizens who later were to come into prominence in her own and broader fields. W. C. Goudy, who had come here from the east to study law under Judge Wead, and incidentally to lay the foundation of that career that was to gain him, for many years in later life, the undisputed title of Chicago's leading lawyer; S. P. Shope, afterwards Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois; Leonard F. Ross, hero of Vera Cruz and Cerro Gordo, educated to the law but making his claim to recognition in the Civil War when, after the capture of Fort Donel-

son, he was commissioned Brigadier General; and Col. L. W. Ross, for whom the town had been named, and who was destined to become its greatest and most constructive citizen and who was just beginning his long and brilliant career in law and politics.

The next decade was to see the names of Robert Ingersoll, William Pitt Kellogg and S. Corning Judd added to the already glorious roll of the old courthouse. Ingersoll the audacious, the brilliant, the great-hearted—in those days a radical Democrat—engaging here at Proctor's Grove and at other points all over the district, in those joint debates with Fulton's "Old Man Eloquent," Judge Kellogg, which left a trail of brilliance that lingers still in the memories of those who heard them—debates that were destined to end in defeat for Ingersoll in the race for that coveted seat in Congress which he had hoped to win from Kellogg; William Pitt Kellogg (a distant relative and law partner of the Judge), handsome, young, elegant in those days, avoiding the drudgery of the office, but lounging about the court-house and the offices of his Lewistown friends on court days, delighting them with his wit and brilliant anecdote and who was to become in turn Lincoln Elector, Governor of the Territory of Nebraska, reconstruction Governor of Louisiana, and finally Senator from the same state; and S. Corning Judd, who in the seventies as Chancellor of the Episcopal Diocese of Illinois came into prominence through his prosecution for the Episcopal Church of the case against the Rev. Dr. Cheney, which commenced in 1869 and is considered one of the most important cases of this kind ever conducted in this country, and who was appointed Postmaster of Chicago under Cleveland in 1885.

But the Golden Age of Lewistown was probably denoted by the fifties, a period of great importance in the history of the whole of Illinois. Its development was coincidental with, if indeed, not attributable to, the sudden rise of the press to a position of enormous power and influence and its wilful shaking off of the old trammels and restraints that hitherto



NEW COURT HOUSE.



had made it an organ of subservience rather than of leadership. It was the great hour of the "country editor" in Illinois, and the press found in this state, which was virtually the arena of the great slavery struggle that was to terminate in the Civil War, an instrument made to its hand.

It was an anti-slavery editor, Paul Selby, who called together the Illinois editors united on this sentiment and organized a party which should take unqualified grounds in opposition to slavery, and out of this meeting grew the organization of the Republican party, born and nourished in this State, and giving to the nation one of its greatest Presidents and to the world one of its greatest Liberators.

Back of the leaders on either side of this issue were ranged a stalwart group, and the battle might be said to have been fought to its ultimate conclusion in the columns of these newspapers. Among those on the Democratic side in unflinching support of Douglas was W. T. Davidson of Lewistown; a "country editor," to be sure, but wielding one of the powerful pens in the Military Tract, having at his disposal all the gifts of invective, sarcasm, pathos and illuminating humor. "It is not too much to say" wrote a contemporary, at his death, "that Davidson belongs in that small class of really great editors; that he was to Illinois provincial journalism what Bennett, Greeley, Dana, Storey, Medill and other master journalists were to national newspaperdom. He had filled and dominated his restricted sphere as thoroughly and well as they did their larger fields."

In Mr. Davidson's later life he held for the character of Lincoln the most intense veneration and reverence. He came to be regarded as an important authority on Lincolniana and his lectures on Lincoln and Douglas were delivered all over the United States. He was one of Lewistown's most picturesque characters.

The two greatest days in the history of the town, those on which it bases its surest claim to historical recognition, are known upon its calendar as "Douglas Day," and "Lincoln Day."

Lincoln and Douglas had become, as will have been seen, familiar figures about the streets of Lewistown in the forties, and the passing years had brought to both—but particularly to Douglas—increasing fame. Douglas was at this time the most noted man in America, and the Democratic Party was looking forward to the next Presidential election to place him in the Executive Chair. The country was prescient with some great danger to the Union growing out of the increasing agitation over the question of slavery and state's rights and Lincoln, though lacking the fame of Douglas was believed to be no mean opponent. The challenge which Lincoln had given Douglas for that series of debates throughout the state, which has come to be referred to as the "hundred days' contest," had been accepted and the Lewistown speeches preceded the first of those engagements—the Ottawa debate—by a few days only.

Masters, in "The Lincoln and Douglas Debates," which is included in the collection of his poems called "The Great Valley," has put into the mouth of his uncouth philosopher a description of that day.

them were great days.

One time the Little Giant came here with Linkern  
And talked from the steps of the court-house;  
And you never saw such a crowd of people;  
Democrats, Whigs, Locofocos,  
Know-nothings and Anti-masonics,  
Blue lights, Spiritualists, Republicans  
Free-soilers, Socialists, American—such a crowd.  
Linkern's voice squeaked up high,  
And didn't carry.  
But Douglas!

People out yonder in Procter's Grove,  
A mile from the Court house steps,  
Could hear him roar and hear him say:  
"I'm going to trot him down to Egypt  
And see if he'll say the things he says  
To the black republicans, in northern Illinois."

It made you shiver all down your spine  
To see that face and hear that voice—  
And that was The Little Giant!

And then on the other hand there was  
Abe Linkern standing six foot four,  
As thin as a rail, with high-keyed voice,  
And sometimes solemn, and sometimes comic  
As any clown you ever saw,  
And runnin' Col. Lankfor's little steamer,  
As it were you know, which would bobble the skiff,  
Which was the law;  
And The Little Giant's other foot  
Would slip on the bank, which was the constitution  
And you could almost hear him holler "ouch."  
And Linkern would say: This argument  
Of the Senator's is thin as soup  
Made from the shadow of a starved pigeon!  
And then the crowd would yell, and the cornet band  
Would play, and men would walk away and say:  
Linkern floored him. And others would say:  
He ain't no match for the Little Giant.  
But I'll declare if I could decide  
Which whipped the other.

Proctor's Grove, where Douglas delivered his address  
on this occasion (you remember how "Hod Putt" beholding  
How Old Bill Piersol and others grew in wealth  
Robbed a traveler once in Proctor's Grove)

is still referred to by its original name, although it is now  
platted into town lots under the name of Davidson's Sec-  
ond Addition. It formerly comprised thirteen acres shaded  
by magnificent forest trees. It lies to the south and  
west of the town, within walking distance, and used to be  
the forum for all open air speaking in the early days in  
the history of Lewistown. It was the place where po-  
litical rallies were held, and Fourth of July celebrations, and  
especially was it noted as the theatre of those stirring

debates that used to engage the wit and eloquence and logic of the public men of that day. It was at Proctor's Grove that William Pitt Kellogg once crossed swords with S. Corn-ing Judd; here Ingersoll and Judge William Kellogg began their series in their senatorial race of 1860; and here the voice of almost every distinguished man possessed of the gift of oratory in central Illinois was heard at one time or another.

But the red letter day for Proctor's Grove is forever fixed in its history as August 16, 1858—"Douglas Day."

The importance of the occasion can be imagined. On the Friday preceding the Monday which was the 16th the "Little Giant" had spoken at Havana, and on Saturday morning a committee of Lewistown's citizens from the Democratic ranks—I note among them the names of W. C. Goudy and Col. L. W. Ross—went to that place to escort Douglas to their city. Several miles out of town they were met by a great concourse of people come out to do him honor; a brass band played, and much cheering went to the general effect of a triumphal entry into the town. Mr. Douglas was entertained at the house of Mr. Goudy, and during that three days' stay, for he remained till Tuesday morning, hundreds of citizens called upon him; the string band, that ubiquitous small town adjunct, serenaded him, a display of fireworks added its glare and glory, and all went splendidly.

On Monday morning, however, an effigy of "Douglas the Traitor" was found conspicuously displayed in the square; also the ropes of the Democratic pole had been cut and a small civil war threatened. Excitement ran high but the matter was finally passed over in the press of the great occasion.

Immense delegations came to Lewistown from every township in the county. It was estimated that half the county was there, for it must be remembered that not only was this section of the state intensely Democratic but Douglas had been for twenty years its political hero. Therefore when he began his speech that day in Proctor's Grove he literally looked down upon acres of faces, probably 5,000. For the

first and only time in his experience, it is said, his voice was unequal to the occasion and after he had spoken for an hour Col. Ross was called upon to address the people in his stead.

On the following day, which was August the 17th, Lincoln came to Lewistown. He, also, came from Havana where he had gone to address the people. He was escorted from that place to Lewistown by a committee consisting of Major Walker, his old friend, John W. Proctor and others. He also was met by a delegation, though a much smaller one (seventy-six horsemen, seventeen wagons and buggies are mentioned). No doubt the brass band came again into play; he too, was serenaded duly and there was much greeting and hand-shaking to be gone through. At two o'clock that afternoon, he spoke from the portico of the old court house. How singularly at home he must have looked! That tall, gaunt, dramatic figure, full of grave dignity, standing between those great columns of unpolished, native stone.

It is recorded that he began simply and directly, as was his usual way, addressing his remarks, apparently, to an old man on the right flank of the crowd. He spoke earnestly for several minutes; then some men on the other side called out: "Abe, you've talked to them fellers long enough. Now talk to this side awhile." Whereupon Lincoln quietly apologized for his preoccupied manner and made the rest of his speech to the other side!

Lincoln's audience was by no means so large as Douglas' had been, but it gave him close, even rapt, attention. Major Walker heard him with awe and wonder. Twenty-five years had passed since he had heard his voice in debate, and although he had been told that his friend had made great progress in the matter of public speaking he was not prepared for the power and eloquence, the tremendously moving quality of his simple speech.

It was on this occasion that Lincoln delivered the glowing eulogy on the Declaration of Independence which the London Times commented on as worthy to be preserved among the Nation's classics.

Lincoln was entertained at dinner that night by Major Walker, spent the night with Mr. John W. Proctor, and the next morning was driven by the Major to the point—thirty-two miles away—where he was to take his train. The Major bade good-bye to Lincoln there, and neither he nor Lewistown was to see his face again.

## V.

## THE MCNEELY MANSION.

Perhaps the most interesting monument to the fifties still extant in Lewistown is the stately old house which Col. L. W. Ross, son of Ossian Ross, built in the middle of the decade. Although it has passed from possession of the family, and has sustained some injury from fire, it is still in an excellent state of preservation, having been restored by Mr. A. J. Ray, with a fine sense of fitness and an appreciation of its historic value. Mr. John Kennedy is the present owner of the house. It is, by common consent, identified with the McNeely mansion of the "Anthology." So descriptive of the Ross fortunes are the first lines of the Washington McNeely epitaph—except that the girls were sent to Notre Dame and Vassar—that it reads like true biography:

Rich, honored by my fellow citizens,  
The father of many children, born of a noble mother,  
All raised there  
In the great mansion-house, at the edge of the town.  
Note the cedar tree on the lawn!  
I sent all the boys to Ann Arbor, all the girls to Rockford,  
The while my life went on, getting more riches and honors—  
Resting under my cedar tree at evening.  
The years went on.  
I sent the girls to Europe;  
I dowered them when married.  
I gave the boys money to start in business.  
They were strong children as apples  
Before the bitten places show.



HOME OF MAJOR WALKER IN LEWISTOWN.

Major Walker  
Lewistown  
1915



Also three names of the McNeely children are Ross names; but Mary died in infancy; John, who "fled the country in disgrace," was the bright particular star of the family, and Jennie who, peradventure, "died in child-birth," is Mrs. G. K. Barrere of Los Angeles, California, and has just written me in response to my inquiry if I might without offense to her so identify her old home: "I have not the least objection to your speaking of the McNeely mansion as the Ross home..... Adverse criticism has such a different meaning to me from what it once had. It is only the reflection of one's own viewpoint. There are two sides to everything in life, including people, and it is up to us which side we see." It is an amusing incongruity, considering the fate of "Jennie," that Mrs. Barrere's letter ends: "I wish you might see our three grandsons. They are the joy of our lives."

Colonel Ross was forty-three when he began the erection of the "mansion-house at the edge of the town." Already honors had begun to find him out. He had been twice chosen to a seat in the Legislature; his service in the Mexican war had brought him the title of Colonel; he had been Presidential Elector in 1848; and he was the acknowledged leader of the Democratic party in Central Illinois.

In early life he had married Miss Frances Simms, the daughter of a fine old Virginia family, a sister to the wife of Major Walker, and a thriving group of boys and girls was growing up about him, crowding the modest limits of the parental quarters. Moreover, to build a house is an instinctive act in man—a reaching out, perhaps, after some portion of that material permanence that is the undoubted tenure of things that are made with hands.

Somewhere along the Hudson Colonel Ross had once seen a house that exactly pleased him. He had obtained the plans, and now that a permanent home was in contemplation, he carried them out to the last architectural minutia. The house stands today exactly as when completed. The main body of the building is the old square form with the wide hall running through the center, but it extends

in the rear on three different levels, after the New England fashion, adapting itself to the gentle decline of the land at that point, beginning with the kitchen and servants' quarters and terminating in the wood and carriage houses. Indeed the most interesting view of it is obtained from the rear, but trees and shrubbery obscure its fine proportions from the camera.

The house, which contains seventeen rooms, was built of brick burned in its own door-yard, the stone for its foundations came from the valley of the Spoon, where, also, the lime for the plaster was kilned—a fine old house, as native to its surroundings as the forest trees on its lawn. H. V. V. Clute, a young master carpenter and wood-worker, came from the East and spent a year on its interior finish, and the window and door lintels, the paneled infolding shutters of the long French windows of the East Parlor, and the banisters of the fine old double staircase attest his skill.

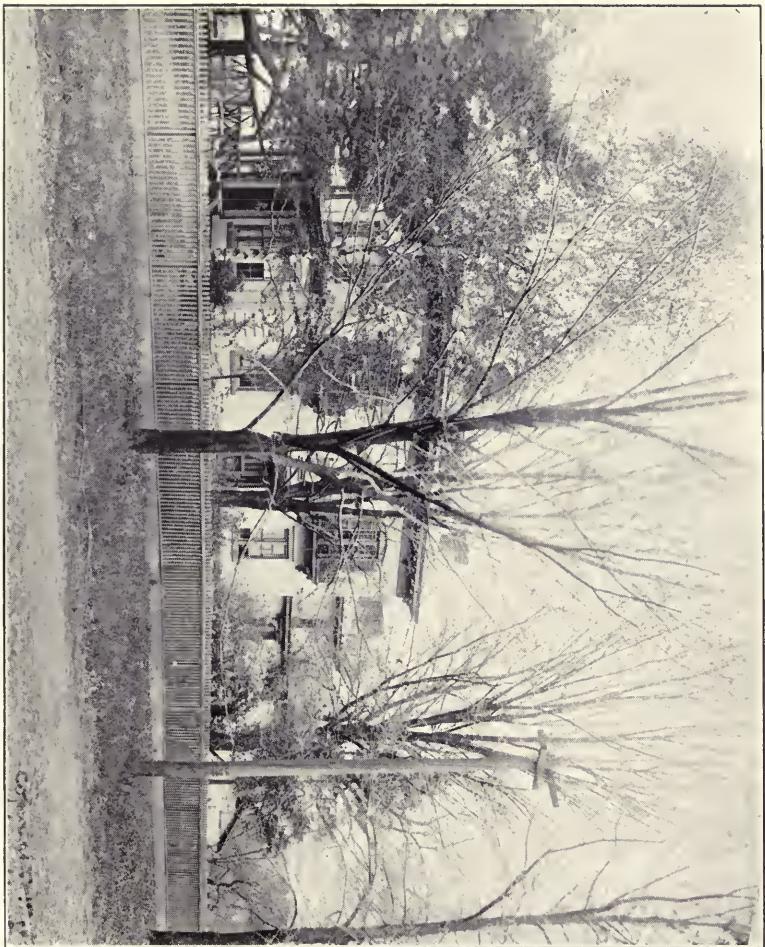
The house is set in spacious grounds. There was formerly a small deer-park of twenty acres in the rear, and

There is a garden of acacia,

Catalpa trees, and arbors sweet with vine.

Although the building was completed in 1857, and became a place of hospitality from its inception, yet owing to that troubrous period preceding the breaking out of the Civil War, the hard years of its duration, and those immediate to its conclusion, no social event of importance took place there until in 1869, when the eldest daughter of the house gave her hand in marriage to Mr. R. M. Hinde.

Mr. Hinde, who is always affectionately referred to as "Judge" Hinde, lived, until his death two years since, in Lewistown and the lovely oval face of Ellen, long since deceased, looks out from a canvas above his mantelpiece—"judge" by courtesy only, a tribute, he used to declare, to his connoisseurship in good whiskies and fine horses. Indulgence in both these tastes had long since been relinquished, but the title persisted, perhaps on other grounds, for he was to the end past master of that subtler, finer sport—the almost



"THE MCNEELY MANSION."  
(Old Ross House)



perished flower of his generation—a raconteur of delightful tales.

Whatever traditions have come to the enrichment of the history of this place, none are more dramatic than those associated with it through the events of the Civil War. Those were stirring times in a section of the state that was essentially Democratic. At a meeting held in the old court-house on April 3rd, 1861, Leonard F. Ross withdrew from the old party, but his brother, Colonel Ross, remained in the Democratic ranks. In 1863 he was chosen a member of the House of Representatives, and being twice re-elected, served till 1869. But those early years of the war were tense years for Lewistown and there was a time when, owing to trouble encountered in making enrollments for the draft, and in arresting deserters, the Provost Marshal of the Congressional District sent a company of German cavalry—always referred to as the Dutch cavalry—to Fulton county. A little later these were reenforced by fifty additional cavalry and a company of eighty infantry. Arrests in the south end of the county had aroused the people in that section to a point of insurrection. "There are no words," says an old newspaper account, "to tell the horror and excitement of that day." A mob of six or seven hundred armed men came up from the south of the county and sent in an ultimatum that unless the prisoners were given up, they would be rescued at whatever cost. Colonel Ross as leader of the Democratic party naturally came under the suspicion of being in sympathy with them, and as one of the counter-moves on the part of the military, a cannon was trained directly upon the fine new house.

Matters were, of course, adjusted. The prisoners were not surrendered, but they were granted an immediate trial under Judge David Davis of Springfield, and were acquitted. The old offensive enrolling officers were removed and men in whose fairness the county had confidence, named in their places. Both sides profited by the experience and thereafter the enrolling went on without resistance; such deserters as were arrested surrendered quietly; and after a time the military marched away.

Many memories stand about this place; memories of famous people entertained at its hospitable board; memories of love and passion evinced by a package of old letters, tied with a faded ribbon, slipped down between the inner and outer walls and discovered by workmen after the recent fire; memories of the pains of birth and death; of towering ambitions and of spiritual disasters; and memories of that long procession of the dead who came to lie, one by one in the library with windows looking towards the west and, presently, in the "burying-yard" which their sturdy progenitor, Ossian Ross, had bequeathed to the city in its infancy, and where so many friends and kindred already were "sleeping, sleeping, sleeping, on the hill".

It may be interesting to know that the tradition of the old Ross line has been carried on by the Colonel's eldest son. John Ross, like his father, entered the profession of the law. He began his career in politics by serving one term in the Legislature of his native state but soon afterwards he went to Washington, D. C. He was made postmaster of the capital city under Cleveland and during the Harrison administration received the appointment making him one of three commissioners of the District of Columbia, a position which he held until his death. His two sons, throughout the late great war served their country in France, Tenny Ross as Lieutenant Colonel in the regular army and Lee with the engineering forces; and the latter's son has but lately graduated from West Point.

Not all the memories are sad that stand about the old "McNeely mansion".

## VI.

### THE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES.

It is strange that during the uneasy period of the Civil War there should have been added to the town of Lewistown the structure that has proved, perhaps, the most constant aesthetic influence throughout the whole of the Spoon River country—The Episcopal Church of St. James.

THE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES AT LEWISTOWN.



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As early as 1859, we learn from the files of *The Fulton Democrat*, an organization of that denomination was formed and a plan was made to build a "beautiful Gothic church". On the old vestry book the name of S. Corning Judd appears as Senior Warden and it was doubtless chiefly due to him that the ideals in church architectures, just beginning to obtain in the East, found expression in this little western town.

Mr. Judd, who has been referred to in the chapter on Old Lewistown, was born in New York state, and had, before coming to Illinois in 1854, a various experience. He studied law in the eastern part of the state, passing his examination in Albany; took up the practice of his profession in Syracuse; presently became editor of the *Syracuse Daily Star*—an old-line Whig paper, devoted to the interests of that party as represented by Webster, Fillmore and other famous political men. He relinquished that post to accept a position with the Department of the Interior at Washington. After eighteen months spent in that city he returned to Syracuse becoming, on this occasion, both proprietor and editor of the *Daily Star*. Upon the general disruption of the Whig party he sold his paper and ventured west, coming to Lewistown and entering into a law partnership with the Honorable W. C. Goudy as previously stated.

He was twenty-seven when he came to Lewistown but he had, from earliest manhood, been an ardent churchman; was familiar with the best in church architecture of his day; and it is probable that he was acquainted with, and interested in, the work and ideals of that organization known as the "New York Ecclesiological Society" which was formed in 1848 for the avowed purpose of working certain radical changes in ecclesiology, the chief principles of which were the adoption of the Pointed Gothic of the Augustan Age of Architecture, deep chancels, proper furniture for chancels, altars, and the like.

The value of this pioneer movement in America scarcely can be over estimated when it is remembered that prior to this time church building throughout the country had consisted almost altogether in the erection of unpleasing rectangular

structures, crudely reminiscent of Grecian temples, and uniting in mongrel assortment, the elements of domestic and of commercial architecture. "I suppose", said Ralph Adams Cramm, in his "Quest of the Gothic", "there is no more awful evidence of rampant barbarism than that which exists in the architecture of the United States between the years of 1820 and 1840." It seems strange indeed that up to the building of Trinity (New York City) by Upjohn in 1847, not a single church, constructed along the lines of the fourteenth century Gothic, was to be found on this continent; and so undeveloped was the whole body of liturgical science that it was not till 1860 that the rector of even that leading church had the courage to vest its choir.

The labors of the Ecclesiological Society covered a period of five years, ending its career in 1853, and already, in '59—so fast the flame of beauty runs—in this remote western town of—at that time—less than a thousand inhabitants, a "beautiful Gothic church" was in contemplation! The success of this ambition, culminating in 1865, was due to the enterprise of Mr. Judd who secured, through influence, the plans for the building, from a New York church architect of considerable fame, Edwin Tuckerman Potter. He consented to furnish them only on the consideration that no expense should be spared in the erection of the building that would make for the complete development of the design. In accordance with this stipulation Mr. Judd obtained the bulk of the funds for the enterprise from the East. He furnished from this source, about \$6,000, and the people of Lewistown contributed the remaining \$2,000 required.

This architect, the son of Bishop Alonzo Potter, was one of the first exponents of the Gothic in America. He has to his credit a number of fine churches in this country, notably the Church of the Heavenly Rest, N. Y., Colt Memorial Church at Hartford, Conn., and the Church of the Good Shepherd, as well as the Memorial Hall at Schenectady, N. Y., but it is doubtful if he has left to do him honor any building, either large or small, more perfectly conceived in the faith of the Seven Lamps than the little church at Lewistown.

As originally built—for a wing has been added since—the building was 66 x 26, but the satisfying proportion of the angle of its pointed roof to the architectural demands of the mass, the propriety of its moderate buttresses, the grace and fitness of its slender tower, all conspire toward the expression of that consummate art “without which”, says Rodin, “the greatest cathedral is less than the smallest church that has it”.

It is built of brick, now time and weather-worn to a lovely monochrome, and relies alone for ornament, upon a design of brick-work that is thrown out in mild relief and which extends around the building some four feet, perhaps, below the eaves; and upon the effect of the long hand-wrought hinges across the door of the portico.

The master carpenter employed in the construction of the church was that H. V. V. Clute who had come West at the behest of Col. Ross several years earlier. The stone and brick work was awarded to local workmen but a masonry-artist from Peoria, Robert Turner, was employed for the ornate portion and a man was brought from Chicago for the interior painting and gilding.

St. James has a very beautiful marble baptismal font, the gift of the Rev. Dr. Clarkson who was the rector of that St. James Episcopal Church of Chicago for which this one was named.

It is unfortunate for Lewistown that St. James is falling into disrepair. Many of its more able parishioners have moved away or died, and this lovely monument to the spiritual and aesthetic aspiration of an earlier day, which has won the praise of every lover of good architecture who has come within its neighborhood, is suffering decline. Mr. Frederick Fultz, whose name is associated with some of the best early civic and domestic architecture in Chicago, made at one time, elaborate drawings of the building, and pronounced it, in his opinion, one of the most beautiful and perfect examples of Gothic architecture in America, but unfortunately for the purposes of this book, these drawings have disappeared since his death, and no trace of them can be found.

Time and the tenderness of vines is over it, but already there is about this little church, but slightly more than half a century old, the pathos of an unregarded beauty; the fleeting loveliness of things that are conceived in the high faith of love and aspiration, but are fore-doomed, after the brief flowering of an hour, "to pass and to be as dust that is blown now this way and now that, and in the end is gathered to the wilderness of lifeless things."

## VII.

## SCHOOL DAYS OF THE POET.

For the purposes of poetry the education of Shakespeare according to Ben Johnson was, perhaps, ideal—"a little Latin and less Greek." An academic training is necessarily an embarrassment to an ego seeking "a gesture of mine own." The contemplations of "Theodore the Poet" are more directly to the purpose; and just as Mr. Masters has conceived his characters as drawing their philosophy from their occupations—"Griffy the Cooper" from his tubs and "Dow Kritt" from digging "all the ditches about Spoon River"—so we may suppose as autobiographic his conception of the boy who

sat for long hours

On the shore of the turbid Spoon  
With deep-set eye, staring at the door of  
the crawfish's burrow,  
Waiting for him to appear;  
Who wondered in a trace of thought.  
What he knew, what he desired, and why he  
lived at all;

and, as a significant intimation of that "orientation of the soul to the conditions in life" which is Masters' own definition of poetry, the introspection which completes the poem:

But later your vision watched for men and  
women  
Hiding in burrows of fate amid great cities,  
Looking for the souls of them to come out,  
So that you could see

How they lived, and for what,  
And why they kept crawling so busily  
Along the sandy way where the water fails  
As the summer wanes.

The ten years which the poet spent in Lewistown seem to have been variously employed; in school—both the grades and high; in newspaper work in a local office; in sundry adventures in long-distance journalism; and in reading law in his father's office—which undertaking was one of not unmixed enthusiasm and suffered the interruption of a winter's study at Knox College at Galesburg, Illinois. Also there was a continual preoccupation with literature, especially poetry, and endless experiments in verse. Four hundred poems before he was twenty-three! It was as a little boy in the grades that he came under the tutelage of that benign character Esther Sparks, who is the "Emily Sparks" of the "Anthology."

The extreme tenderness which Masters has brought to the conception of the women of his characterization is infinitely divining; those forsaken women, "Louise Smith" and "Mary McNeely," regarding, each, her soul's disaster; "Flossie Cabanis" transcending the sordid failure of her life by that prayer which was the voice of her histrionic aspiration; "Caroline Branson," and the tragedy of the "room with lamps;" "Edith Conant," the pity of her unremembered beauty; "Elizabeth Childers," who cries to the child who died with her death voicing the suffering of women too fine for the harsh conditions of life; even the prostitute "Georgine Sand Miner," who cries out against her ultimate degradation,

If Daniel had only shot me dead!  
Instead of stripping me naked of lies,  
A harlot in body and soul!

"Emily Sparks" is one of the most subtly rendered, as she is one of the most universal, of all the Spoon River folk. She is long since dead, but the "eternal silence" of her that spoke to the soul of "Reuben Pantier" is eloquent to a larger audience:

My boy, wherever you are,  
Work for your soul's sake,  
That all the clay of you, and all the dross  
    of you,  
May yield to the fire of you  
Till the fire is nothing but light!....  
    Nothing but light!

It was during his first year in the high school that Masters came under the influences of the teacher who proved to be his greatest inspiration, and who awakened in him an abiding interest in literature—Miss Mary Fisher.

Miss Fisher was a young woman of twenty-seven when she came to Lewistown in 1885, and her preparation had been exceptional. She had studied in Chicago, Edinburg and Boston. At Boston she had touched elbows with the Concord School, had caught the flame of its enthusiasm for letters and ideas and here in Lewistown in the one year of her sojourn, she held aloft the torch. Ten years later she began the publication of a series of books that established her claim to a place of distinction in the field of letters and gave proof of her exceptional breadth and vision as an educator. Between the years of 1895 and 1902 she published successively "Twenty-five Letters on English Authors," "A Group of French Critics," "A General Survey of American Literature," and a novel, "Gertrude Dorrence."

The inspiration and value of the work of such a teacher is always incalculable. In Miss Fisher's group at Lewistown were two others beside the now illustrious Edgar Lee, who were destined to feel the stirring of ambitions and of undoubted gifts—Julia Brown, who afterwards became the wife of Dr. William Strode, and of whom I have already spoken, and Margaret Gilman George.

Margaret George, though coming under the influence of Miss Fisher, was not of the high school. A faulty heart valve, which caused her too early death, rendered her health inadequate to the rigor of the public school so that it was necessary for her father to instruct her at home. As a result the scholarship of this frail young girl was exceptional.

Not only was she a mistress of English, but she had a working knowledge of French and was a fine Greek scholar. Her penchant was for the classics, and she had a remarkable knowledge of the Bible. Among the mementoes which her mother now treasures is a little Oxford Bible given her by the Poet when they were both very young. "For Margaret from Lee" is inscribed on the fly-leaf.

This period was one full of dreams and plans and small exciting adventures for the ambitious youngsters. There is a delightful story of a compact entered into by Edgar Lee and Margaret, to write the very worst ballad conceivable and to undertake to get it published. Nothing came of Masters' venture—perhaps he succeeded too completely—but Margaret wrote a long sentimental tale in rhyme which she called "The Ballad of the Dishcloth" and sent it to Eugene Field who was then conducting the "column" called "Flats and Sharps" in the Chicago Record. Its immediate acceptance filled her with unholy glee, but on its publication it was found that Field had taken liberties with the concluding stanzas, and her triumph was changed to chagrin.

"The Ballad of the Dishcloth" concerned itself with the love affair of a housemaid, her lover the butcher boy, and a shadowy third, a rejected suitor—the milkman. The dishcloth was the signal to the lover that the mistress was away and he might venture upon a call. After a time it was decided that he should go away to seek his fortune, but should return within a year to make her his bride. True to his pledge the lover returns, and his emotion on finding the dish cloth out and the tragic denouement, as described by Margaret, is as follows:

"Oh, trust sublime!" he fondly cried,  
And ran to kiss the signal white,  
But as he reached the casement's side  
What tableaux met his frenzied sight.

There stood false Susan with a man  
Her head reclining on his breast:  
He loudly praised the dish-cloth plan  
The while her coral lips he pressed.

One leap the frantic lover made  
And with the rival wiped the floor!  
In her own dishcloth choked the maid  
And left the scene forever more.

But Gene Field had omitted the last two stanzas and substituted in their stead:

There sat false Susan in a chair  
Resplendent still in buxom charms,  
Holding, Oh, horror and despair!  
A puling infant in her arms.

"What means this spectacle?" said he,  
Brushing a scalding tear aside;  
"I thought you would not come," said she,  
"And so became the milkman's bride."

"What means the dishcloth then," he cried,  
"That from your upper casement swings?"  
"That's not a dishcloth," she replied,  
"That's where we dry the baby's things!"

The home of Margaret constituted the nucleus of what might be called the literary group in Lewistown. Mr. B. Y. George, who was the Presbyterian minister of the place, was a scholarly, broadminded man. He occasionally contributed to the periodicals, especially church journals; lectured at intervals on literature and the Bible; took a deep and intelligent interest in the questions of the day, and never wearied of the society of the young folks growing up about him. Mrs. George will be remembered chiefly as a personality—a woman who found a delightful humor in the spectacle of life. She used to give entertaining talks on George Eliot, Shakespeare and the Brownings before Women's Clubs and in the homes of "literary" people, but it was only among the intimates of the inner circle of her friends that she abandoned herself to those moods wherein impersonation, augmented by a natural gift of mimicry, made the relation of the merest incident, having the elements of social comedy, a thing to be remembered.

The Georges had two daughters. The younger, Anne, \*is now regarded as one of the foremost educators in the United States. She is the American representative of the Montessori system; is the head of that school in Washington, D. C., and to her contributions on the subject to various popular magazines is chiefly due the prompt and intelligent acceptance, in this country, of the methods of that school.

Margaret, the elder daughter, would seem to have inherited, in fortunate conjunction, the intellectuality of the father and the taste and personality of the mother. "The good stars met in her horoscope," and only the briefness of her life, perhaps, defeated her dreams of a place of permanence among the Lyra Americana. In the seven years between her graduation from Lewistown High and her marriage her poems found their way into the best magazines of the day; *The Century*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's* and many others. Her poem "Shrived," which appeared in *Lippincott's*, elicited from the editor of that magazine praise that did much to establish her place among the younger poets, and already she had begun to be spoken of as the "coming poet of the West." In 1890 she collaborated with Mr. Davidson in the production of a novel, but this was merely an experiment and proved less interesting to her than her verse. A photograph of her in her young girlhood shows an exquisitely delicate profile, and in the delineation of the high fine brow and the full curved mouth, that supreme combination found in women who achieve in love and art—passion and intellect.

She married in 1895 Mr. W. T. Davidson, and left at her death a little son, Gilman, who was in the late war with the flying corps in France.

Several years after her death her husband began to collect her poems from various sources, and to print them in the columns of his paper under the caption "Her Songs." "I have found," he says by way of explanation of the previously unpublished verses, "a trunkful of manu-

\*Miss Anne George, now Mrs. Robert Miller, Evanston, Illinois.

scripts, written many of them, on scraps of paper, some in dim penciling, some mere fragments with pages missing; a holy jumble of precious gems."

As if some prescience of her early doom had been vouchsafed her—she died of heart failure—there was found among the many exquisite songs of gladness and love, and hope and heart-break—those "things that perish never"—"Mora...tura."

I am the mown grass, dying at your feet—  
 The pale grass gasping faintly in the sun :  
 I shall be dead long, long 'ere day is done.  
 That you may say, "The air today was sweet."  
 I am the mown grass dying at your feet.

I am the white syringa, falling now  
 When some one shakes the bough ;  
 What matter if I lose my life's brief noon ?  
 You laugh, "A snow in June?"  
 I am the white syringa, falling now.

I am the waning lamp that flickers on,  
 Striving to give my old unclouded light  
 Among the rest that makes your garden bright :  
 Let me burn still till all my oil is gone.  
 I am the waning lamp that flickers on.

I am your singer, singing my last note—  
 Death's fingers clutch my throat !  
 New grass will grow, new flowers bloom and fall,  
 New lamps play out against your garden wall.  
 I am your singer, singing my last note.

## VIII.

### HERE AND THERE.

That all the people of the "Anthology" are not "sleeping on the hill" is evidenced by the occasional presence upon the streets of Lewistown of an uncouth individual, ragged and unshorn, whom inquiry discovers to be that digger of ditches about Spoon River, "Dow Kritt". His occupation is in harmony with his appearance, and whatever his philosophy





DR. STRODE.  
("William Jones") and his collection.

might prove to be on close acquaintance it is obvious that he does not "need to die to learn about roots". A certain Charley Metcalf is pointed out as "Willie Metcalf". His occupation, and his place of residence as well, is a local livery stable. His talent for handling horses is well known; indeed his sense-oneness with all forms of nature suggest a certain atavism. A simple, harmless soul! "William Jones", who has been identified as Dr. Strode, late of Bernadotte, is daily seen about the round of his professional calls or occupied with civic business. A room of his office suite is occupied by his collections and one great cabinet and several tiers of moth-proof boxes containing bird-skins (each wrapped in its tiny shroud) have obtruded themselves within the confines of the office proper.

But every passage about the town evokes, for the lovers of the "Anthology", the drama of the past. The courthouse which "Silas Dement", on his return from Joliet, found built on the site of the one which he had burned; the bank whose failure involved not less than ten characters of the "Anthology"; and Beadle's Opera House (the "hall of Nicolas Bindle") all stand as monuments to the past, and keep in the steadfastness of brick and stone, "the glory of their fallen day."

Beadle's Opera House, which belongs to the estate of the late Mr. R. M. Hind, has passed into disuse as a place of entertainment since the advent of the cinematograph. Its frescoes are dim with time and the spider has made his lair in the long deep recesses of the windows; the walls of the dressing rooms are scrawled with the names of many mummers; and on the deep stage

that overlooks the chairs

.....and where a pop-eyed daub  
Of Shakespeare, very like the hired man  
Of Christian Dahlmann, brow and pointed  
beard,

Upon a drab proscenium outward stared,

odd bits of "property" stand about with a pathetic patience. Here walk the ghosts of "Flossie Cabanis" and of "Ralph

Barrett, the coming romantic actor" who enthralled her soul; here "Harry Wilmans" heard the Sunday-school superintendent make that flamboyant speech which sent him to the rice field near Manila and through

days of loathing and nights of fear  
To the hour of the charge through the steam-  
ing swamp

Following the flag:

and here was staged one of the episodes of "The Spooniad" which "Jonathan Swift Somers" conceived in epic mood but never carried to completion. Of those two conflicting forces in Spoon River it was the liberals who

in the hall of Nicolas Bindle held  
Wise converse and inspiriting debate.  
Lewistown has two cemeteries. The one  
Where holy ground is and the cross  
Marks every grave

lies to the east of the town. It covers three slopes of a hill on the summit of which is a great gray Christ upon a cross. Gallighers, Maloneys, O'Daniels and many other names bespeaking a Celtic origin are found upon those gravestones but one looks in vain for the name of "Father Malloy". There never has been a Father Malloy in the town, it appears, but a certain Father Thebes answers to that description. Every one was fond of Father Thebes, especially the boys. But one insists on a Father Malloy. The name carries conviction—and "Spoon River" is a large territory.

The Protestant cemetery, which also is on a hill—which covers several gentle knolls in fact—is north of Lewistown and is separated from the town by a ravine. No pleasanter place could be found for long, long sleeping. A winding road leads through it, flanked on either side, in the summer, by purple phlox; great elms and small sweet cedars fill the place with restful shadows and with pleasant scents and sounds; and on the central eminence stand those limestone pillars already hallowed by the memory of Lincoln and inscribed to "Our Patriot Dead". All about one are names, that to the literary pilgrim, are essentially "Spoon River" names; all





"OVER ME A FOND FATHER ERECTED THIS MARBLE SHAFT ON  
WHICH STANDS THE FIGURE OF A WOMAN."

about one on the quaint moss-grown slabs are willow trees and gates ajar, harps and lambs and upward pointing hands. Suddenly through the trees one is startled to descry the figure of a woman upon a marble shaft. Even the long grasses cannot stay the impatience of the feet! " 'Percy Bysshe Shelley' ", one says softly with amazement. "Can there really be a 'Percy Bysshe Shelley' in this place?" But astonishment is scarcely less on finding upon the pediment that supports the classic figure

William Cullen Bryant  
Died March 24, 1875  
Age 24 years.

Investigation proves that the young man was a relative and namesake of the poet. His father was that Honorable H. L. Bryant who introduced Douglas to his audience in Proctor's Grove on the occasion of his great speech. William Cullen like "Percy Bysshe Shelly" of the "Anthology" was the victim of an accident, having been killed by the discharge of a gun while duck hunting on Thompson's Lake. The marble statue is a dramatic figure against the massed background of the cedars, and the coincidence of the two names is a sufficiently illuminating commentary upon the literary method of Masters.

In all this silent place one may hear no sound save the wind in the branches of the trees, the insect voices in the long grass and the importunate incessant crying of a flock of tit-mice that have their haunt in the neighboring ravine. Only the "memories" are here, their

eyes closed with the weariness of tears  
An immeasurable weariness!

And yet the loiterer for an hour will find in these grassy paths now bright with sun, now soft with shadows, these low mounds and unostentatious gravestones, how all things conspire for peace, and those who are a little weary may find themselves reflecting, as Shelley in the Protestant cemetery without the walls of Rome where his body came ultimately to rest: "It would almost make one fall in love with Death itself to think one should be buried in so sweet a place."









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